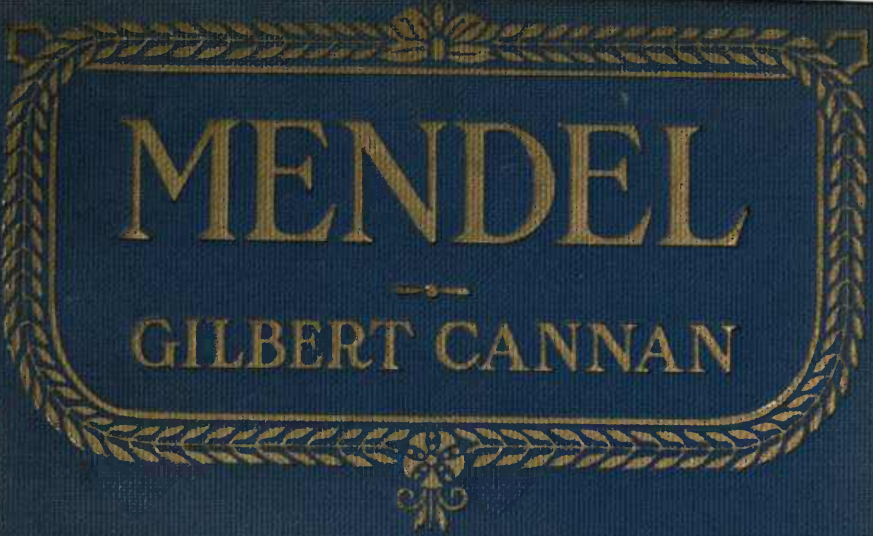

MENDEL

GILBERT CANNAN

ia

IS MAN FREE ONLY WHEN CORRUPT?

BY [illegible] W. PEATTIE.

GILB[illegible]T CANNAN is, perha[illegible]ext to George Moore, th[illegible]ost emancipated man now writing. More emancipated than Shaw or than Wells. They are, all four of them, unbroken stallions plunging about a copious paddock, but Cannan and Moore are the worst of the lot, though no more talented than the others. Of course, Shaw isn't sure what he means, and Wells has only recently found conviction, while Moore always knows what he means, and Cannan is at least sure of many things which he does not mean. Chiefly, he does not mean ever to admire limits, bounds, proprieties, conventions, or traditional virtues. He feels liberal toward the sins. He forgives everything except the arranged, the sterilized, and the expected.

Read "MENDEL" and you will see what I mean. (George H. Doran, N. Y.) Mendel is the hero. He is an Austrian Jew who is reared in the London slums, and he can paint like a demon. That is to say, he can almost paint like Cezanne. But it is many years before he gets to Cezanne. He comes up through bitter poverty to the art schools, through the art schools to his own methods, through his own methods to stand spellbound before the face with the crooked mouth which Cezanne said was that of his wife, unhappy man that he was to have to own it!

Mendel admits that he has a dingy soul, and the reader regards the epithet as mild. The truth is, Mendel adores dirt, which, however, does not prevent him from loving beauty any more than zest for sin kept Villon or Verlaine, Byron or Wilde, from loving exquisiteness. The Ghetto did not offend Mendel. He liked the smells and the reek of his own people, was contented when surrounded with their solemnity, their observances, and their fanaticism. Not that these things affected his conduct. He had as many women as Jean Christophe, but Cannan seems to think a pure and high minded girl mighty lucky when at last she got Mendel for an accepted husband.

The girl regarded herself as blessed among women, though she had been told everything about Mendel's life—which telling took a long time and immense candor. But why Cannan should have taken the trouble to make this woman pure and to keep her steadfast cannot quite be imagined. Why this clinging
to u'grown supe Why this
to a ejudice?
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ial passion emed verit-
the source of he power. Lo-
too, the Scotch a and his avid
n who slew him her caresses;
Mitchell, the English gentleman
found bohemia an active poison;
d some of the little models and
wenches are clever, indeed. It makes a great welter altogether, and Cannan handles it with sinister mastery. But 'tis an ill book, judge it how you will. The theory that man is only free when he is defiled doesn't sound very convincing to me, and reiteration doesn't strengthen the argument.

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Irene Owen Andrews

Aug-2-1917

MENDEL

GILBERT CANNAN

MENDEL

A STORY OF YOUTH

BY

GILBERT CANNAN

AUTHOR OF "THREE SONS AND A MOTHER," "OLD MOLE,"
"ROUND THE CORNER," ETC., ETC.

NEW YORK
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To D. C.

Shall tears be shed because the blossoms fall,
  Because the cloudy cherry slips away,
And leaves its branches in a leafy thrall
  Till ruddy fruits do hang upon the spray?

Shall tears be shed because the youthful bloom
  And all th'excess of early life must fade
For larger wealth of joy in smaller room
  To dwell contained in love of man and maid?

Nay, rather leap, O heart, to see fulfilled
  In certain joy th'uncertain promised glee,
To have so many mountain torrents spilled
  For one fair river moving to the sea.

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BOOK ONE: EAST

BOOK ONE: EAST

CHAPTER I

LONDON WHERE THE KING LIVES

THE boat-train had disgorged its passengers, who had huddled together in a crowd round the luggage as it was dragged out of the vans, and then had jostled their way out into the London they had been so long approaching. When the crowd scattered it left like a deposit a little knot of strange-looking people in brilliant clothes who stared about them pathetically and helplessly. There were three old men who seemed to be strangers to each other and a handsome Jewess with her family—two girls and three boys. The two elder boys carried on their backs the family bedding, and the youngest clung to his mother's skirts and was frightened by the noise, the hurrying crowds of people, the vastness and the ugly, complicated angular lines of the station. The woman looked disappointed and hurt. Her eyes searched through the crowds, through every fresh stream of people. She was baffled and anxious. Once or twice she was accosted, but she could not understand a word of what was said to her. At last she produced a piece of paper and showed it to a railway official, who came up thinking it was time these outlandish folk moved on.

He could not read what was written on it, for the paper was very dirty and the characters were crabbed and awkwardly written. He turned to the old men, one of whom said excitedly the only English words he knew —"London—Jewish—Society." The official looked relieved. These people did not look like Jews, and the eldest girl and the little boy were lovely. He went away, and the woman, whose hopes had risen, once more looked disconsolate. The little boy buried his face in her apron and wept.

A surburban train came wheezing into the platform, which was at once alive with hurrying men in silk hats and tail-coats. Catching sight of the brilliantly attired group, the handsome woman and the lovely girl, the boys with their heads bowed beneath the billowing piles of feather bedding, some of them stopped. The little boy looked up with tears in his eyes. One man put his hand in his pocket and threw down a few coppers. Others followed his example, and the little boy ran after the showering pennies as they bounced in the air, and rolled, span, and settled. He danced from penny to penny and a crowd gathered; for, in his bright jerkin and breeches and little top-boots, dancing like a sprite, gay and wild, he was an astonishing figure to find in the grime and ugliness of the station. Silver was thrown among the pennies to keep him dancing, but at last he was exhausted and ran to his mother with his fists full of money, and the men hurried on to their offices.

The official returned with an interpreter, who discovered that the woman's name was Kühler, that she had expected to be met by her husband, that she had come from Austrian Poland, and that the address written on the piece of paper was Gun Street. The number was indecipherable.

The three old men were given instructions and they went away. The interpreter took charge of the family and led them to a refuge, where he left them, saying that he would go and find Mr. Kühler. With a roof over her head and food provided for her children, Mrs. Kühler sat stoically to wait for the husband she had not seen for two years. She had no preconceived idea of London, and this bleak, bare room was London to her, quite acceptable. The stress and the anxiety of the detestable journey were over. This was peace and good. Her husband would find her. He had come to make a home in London. He had sent for her. He would come.

Hours passed. They slept, ate, talked, walked about the room, and still Mr. Kühler did not come. The peace of the refuge was invaded with memories of the journey, the rattle, rattle, rattle of the train-wheels, the brusque officials who treated the poor travellers like parcels, the soldiers at the frontiers, the wet, bare quay in Holland, the first sight of the sea, immense, ominous, heaving, heaving up to the sky; the stinking ship that heaved like the sea and made the brain oscillate like milk in a pan; the solidity of the English quay, wet and bare, and of the English train, astonishingly comfortable. . . . And still Mr. Kühler did not come.

The girls were cold and miserable. The boys wrestled and practised feats of strength with each other to keep warm, and looked to their mother for applause. She gave it them mechanically as she sat by the little boy, whom she had laid to sleep on the bedding. He would be hungry, she thought, when he woke up, and she must get him food. There was the money which had been thrown to him, but she did not know its value. People do not throw much money away. At home people do not throw even small money away. There such a thing could not happen. There money, like everything else, avoids the poor. But this was rich England, where it rained money.

When the boy woke up she would go out and buy him something good to eat, and if Mr. Kühler did not come to-morrow she would find some work and a room, or a corner of a room, to live in. Perhaps Jacob had gone to America again. He had been there twice, and both times suddenly. People always went to America suddenly. He went out and bought a clean collar, and said he was going and would send money for her as soon as he had enough. . . . Poor Jacob, he could not endure their poverty and he would not steal, but he would always fight the soldiers and the bailiffs when they came to take the bedding. . . . The sea heaved, and it rained money. The two boys began to fight, a sudden fury in both of them. Their sisters rushed to part them and Mrs. Kühler rose.

At the end of the long room she saw Jacob peering from group to group. He looked white and ill, as he had done when he came again and again to implore her to marry him, and she felt half afraid of him, as she had done when the violent fury of love in him had broken down her resistance and dragged her from her comfortable home to the bare life he had to offer her. He came to her now with the same ungraciousness that had marked his wooing, explained to her that he had just got a job and could not get away to meet her, and turned from her to the children. The boys were grown big and strong, and the eldest girl was a beauty. He was satisfied, stooped and picked up little Mendel in his strong arms. The child woke up, gave a little grunt of pleasure as he recognised the familiar smell of his father, and went to sleep again.

"He's heavy," said Mrs. Kühler. "You cannot carry him all the way."

"His face is like a flower," said Jacob.

He went first, carrying the boy, and his family followed him into the roaring streets. The lamps were lit and the shops were dazzling. There were barrows of fruit, fish, old iron, books, cheap jewellery, all lit up with naphtha flares. The children were half frightened, half delighted. The smells and the noise of the streets excited them. Every now and then they heard snatches of their own language and were comforted. They came to shops bearing Yiddish characters and London no longer seemed to them forbiddingly foreign, though they began to feel conscious of their clothes, which made them conspicuous. The boys cursed and growled under the bedding and began to complain that they had so far to go. Mr. Kühler found the child too heavy and had to put him down. Mendel took his mother's hand and trotted along by her side.

They turned into a darkish street which ran for some length between very tall houses. It was obscure enough to allow the clear sky to be seen, patched with cloud and deep blue, starry spaces. At the end of it was a building covered with lights and illuminated signs. They shone golden and splendid. Never had Mendel seen anything so glorious, so rich, so dream-like, so clearly corresponding to that marvellous region where all his thoughts ended, passed out of his reach, and took on a brilliant and mighty life of their own, a glory greater than that of the Emperor at home. But this was England and had only a King.

"Does the King live there?" he asked his mother.

"No; that is a shop."

"Has father got a shop like that?"

"Not yet."

"Will he soon have a shop like that?"

"Very soon."

Mendel would have liked to have stood and gazed at the glorious, glittering shop. He felt sure the King must buy his boots there, and he thought that if he stayed long enough he would see the King drive up in his crystal coach, with his crown on his head, and go into the shop. But his father led the way out of the darkish street into another that was still darker, very narrow, and flanked with little low houses. One of these they entered, and in a small, almost unfurnished room they had supper, and Mendel went to sleep hearing his father say to his mother, "Thirteen shillings." Just before that his father had held his hands out under the candle, and they were raw and bleeding.

One room was luxury to them. At home in Austria they had had a corner of a room, and the three other corners were occupied by the carpenter, the stableman, and the potter. In the centre of the room stood the common water-bucket and the common refuse-tub. London had showered money on them and provided them with a whole room. They felt hopeful.

Mr. Kühler made thirteen shillings a week polishing walking-sticks, and when that trade was bad he could sometimes get work as a furrier. He had intended to take his family over to America, but finding work in London, he thought it better to stay there. Besides, he had a grudge against America, for while there he had invented a device for twisting tails of fur, but his invention had been stolen from him and he had missed his chance of making a fortune. America was evil and living was very dear. London was the more comfortable place for the struggle. And in London he had found Abramovich, the friend of his boyhood, the one creature in the world upon whom he relied. He had no reason for his faith. Abramovich had never done him any good, but he was not of those who pass. He might disappear for years, but he always came back again, and time made no difference. He was always the same. If help was needed he gave it, and if he needed help he asked for it. Abramovich was a very strong reason for staying in London. . . . The boys would soon be working and the eldest girl was a beauty. The match-makers would be busy with her. Another two years, and the match-makers would find her a rich man who would help them all and put money into a business. That was Jacob's desire, to have a business of his own, for he loathed working for another man. He could not do it for long. Always he ended with a quarrel, perhaps with blows, or he simply walked out and would not return.

He was a devout Jew and despised Christians, as he despised luxury, pleasure, comfort, not actively nor with any hatred. He simply did not need them. He had lived without them, and he asked nothing of life. He was alive; that was enough. Passions seized him and he followed them. Without passion he never moved, never stirred a finger except to keep himself alive. Passion had chosen his wife for him. Golda, the beautiful, was his wife. In her he was bound more firmly to his race and his faith, and there was no need to look beyond. He was rooted. She had borne him children, but he had no more ambition for them than for himself. Leah, the beauty, should wed a rich man, not for ambitious reasons, but because, in life, beauty and riches were proper mates. There is a certain orderliness about life, and certain things can only be prevented by an irruption of passion. If that happens, then life takes its revenge and becomes hard and bleak, but it is still life, and only a fool will complain. Jacob never complained, and he took his Golda's reproaches in silence, unless she became unjust, and then he silenced her brutally and callously. She bore with him, because she prized his honesty, his steadfast simplicity, and because she knew that his passion had never wakened a profound answer in herself. She had very slowly been roused to love, which had flowered in her with the birth of her youngest child, in whom she had learned a power of acceptance almost equal to her husband's. Like him, she clung to her race and her faith and never looked beyond.

In London she found that she was left alone and her life was no longer hemmed in by a menacing world of soldiers and police and peasants, who swore the Jews cheated them and spread terrifying tales of Jewish practices upon Christian children. Christian London was indifferent to the Jews, and she could be indifferent to Christian London. She had no curiosity about it and never went above a mile from her house. She mad no attempt to learn English, but could not help gleaning a few words from her children as they picked it up at school. The synagogue was the centre of her life, and from it came all the life she cared to have outside her family. She was absorbed in little Mendel, by whom her world was coloured. If he was happy, that was sunshine to her. If he was oppressed and tearful, her sky was overcast. If he was ill, it seemed to her a menace of the end.

He was a strange child and very slow in growing into a boy. The other children had seemed to shoot into independence almost as soon as they could walk. But Mendel clung to her, would not learn to feed himself, and would not go to sleep at night unless she sang to him and rocked him in the cradle, in which he slept even after he went to school. As long as he could curl up in it he slept in his cradle, and he made her learn as much as she could of an English song which had caught his fancy. It was the only English song she ever knew, and night after night she had to sing it over and over again as she rocked the heavy cradle:—

Daisy, Daisy, give me your answer, do;
I'm half crazy, all for the love of you.

She had no idea what the words meant, but the boy loved the tune and her funny accent and intonation, and even when she was ill and tired she would sing him to sleep, and then sit brooding over him with her fingers just touching his curly hair. And in her complete absorption in his odd, unchildlike childhood she was perfectly content, and entirely indifferent to all that happened outside him. Brutal things, terrible things happened, but they never touched the child, and if she could, she hid the knowledge of them from him.

Abramovich collected a little capital and persuaded Mr. Kühler to join him in a furrier's business. They were not altogether unsuccessful, and Mr. Kühler took a whole house in Gun Street and bought a piano, but soon their capital was exhausted and they had given more credit than they were accorded and the business trickled through their fingers. Mr. Kühler took to his bed, for he could sleep at will and almost indefinitely, and so could avoid seeing poverty once more creeping up like a muddy sea round his wife and children. It had been bad enough when that happened at home, where at the worst there were his relations to help, and there were the potato fields to be despoiled, and, at least, the children could be happy playing in the roads or by the river, or on the sides of the mountain. But here in London poverty was black indeed, and there was no one but Abramovich to help, and he was in almost as bad case as himself. Yet astonishingly Abramovich came again and again to the rescue. He was a little squat, ugly man, the stunted product of some obscure Russian ghetto, and he seemed to live by and for his enthusiasm for the Kühler family. In their presence he glowed, greedily drank in every word that Jacob or Golda said, and was always loud in his praises of the beautiful children. . . . "The sky is dark now," he used to say, "but they will be rich, and they will give you horses and carriages, and Turkey carpets, and footmen, and flowers in the winter, and they will bring English gentlemen to the house and what you want, that you shall have. . . ." "I want nothing," Jacob would say. "I want nothing. I will work and be my own master. I will not steal or help other men to steal." "You wait," Abramovich would reply. "These children have only to go out into London and all will be given to them."

Only the eldest girl listened to these conversations, and she used to hold her head high, and her face would go pale as ferociously she followed up the ideas they suggested to her.

But Abramovich could bring no consolation. Jacob would not go back to the stick-polishing, and at last he could bear it no longer, went out and bought a clean collar, clipped his beard, and without a word of farewell, went to America.

CHAPTER II

POVERTY

THEN followed, for Golda, the blackest years of her life. She removed once more to one room in Gun Street, and she and the two boys earned enough to keep body and soul together. She found work in other people's houses, helped at parties, and when nothing else was available she went to a little restaurant to assist as scullery-maid, and stayed after closing-time to scrub the tables and sweep the floor. For this she was given crusts of bread and scraps from the plates. She never had a word from her husband, and she knew she would not hear unless he made money. If he failed again, as of course he would, he would live in silence, solitary, proud, avoiding his fellow-men, who would have nothing to do with him except he made the surrender of dignity which it was impossible for him to make. She would not hear from him, and he would return one day unannounced, without a word, as though he had come from the next street; and as likely as not he would have given the coat off his back to some one poorer than himself. . . . Jacob was like that. He would give away on an impulse things that it had cost him weeks of saving to acquire. Low as he stood in the world, he seemed always to be looking downwards, as though he could believe in what came up from the depths but not in anything that went beyond him. Golda could not understand him, but she believed in him absolutely. She knew that he suffered even more than she, and she had learned from him not to complain. The Jews had always suffered. That was made clear in the synagogue, where, in wailing over the captivity in Babylon, Golda found a vent for her own sorrows. She would weep over the sufferings of her race as she wept for those who were dead, her father and her mother, and her father's father and her little brother, on the anniversary of their death. However poor she might be she had money to buy candles for them, and whatever the cost she kept the observances of her religion.

So she lived isolated and proud, untouched by the excitements her children found in the houses of their friends and in the streets.

Very wild was the life in the neighbourhood of Gun Street. There were constant feuds between Jews and Christians, battles with fists and sticks and stones. Old Jews were insulted and pelted by Christian youths, and the young Jews would take up their cause. There were violent disputes between landlords and tenants, husbands and wives, prostitutes and their bullies. Any evening, walking along Gun Street, you might hear screaming and growling in one of the little houses. Louder and louder it would grow. Suddenly the male voice would be silent, the female would rise to a shriek, the door would open, and out into the street would be propelled a half-naked woman. She would wail and batter on the door, and, if that were of no avail, she would go to the house of a friend and silence would come again. . . . Or sometimes a door would open and a man would be shot out to lie limp and flabby in the gutter.

Harry, the second boy, took to this wild life like a duck to water. He practised with dumb-bells and learned the art of boxing, and so excited Mendel with his feats of strength that he too practised exercises and learned to stand on his hands, and cheerfully allowed his brother to knock him down over and over again in his ambition to learn the elements of defence and the use of the straight left. In vain: his brain was not quick enough, or was too quick. His hands would never obey him in time, but he dreamed of being a strong man, the strongest man in the world, who by sheer muscle should compel universal admiration and assume authority.

In the family the child's superiority was acknowledged tacitly. He had his way in everything. He wanted such strange things, and was adamant in his whims. If he were not allowed to do as he wished, he lay on the ground and roared until he was humoured; or he would refuse to eat; or he would go out of the house with the intention of losing himself. As he was known all through the neighbourhood for his beauty that was impossible. He was an object of pride to the neighbours, and whenever he was found far from home, there was always some one who knew him to take him back. But Golda could not realise this, and she suffered tortures.

The boy loved the streets and the shops, the markets with their fruit-stalls and fish-barrows, the brilliant colours in Petticoat Lane. He would wander drinking in with his eyes colour and beauty, shaking with emotion at the sight of the pretty little girls with their little round faces, their ivory skins, and their brilliant black eyes. Ugliness hurt him not at all. It was the condition of things, the dark chaos out of which flashed beauty. But cruelty could drive him nearly mad, and he would tremble with rage and terror at the sight of a woman with a bloody face or a man kicking a horse.

He had a friend, a Christian boy, named Artie Beech, who adored him even as Abramovich adored his father. Golda was alarmed by this friendship, thinking no good could come out of the Christians, and she tried to forbid it, but the boy had his way, and he loved Artie Beech as a child loves a doll or a king his favourite. Together the two boys used to creep home from school gazing into the shop windows. One day they saw a brightly coloured advertisement of a beef extract: a picture of a man rending a lion. "It will make you stronger than a lion," said Mendel. "Yes," said Artie, "one drop on the tip of your tongue." "I would be stronger than Harry if I ate a whole bottle," replied Mendel, and they decided to save up to buy the strength-giving elixir. It took them seven weeks to save the price of it. Then with immense excitement they bought the treasure, took it home, and, loathing the taste of it, gulped it down and tossed a button for the right to lick the cork. Feeling rather sick, they gazed at each other with frightened eyes, half expecting to swell so that they would burst their clothes. But nothing happened. Mendel took off his coat and felt his biceps and swore that they had grown. Artie took off his coat: yes, his biceps had grown too.

They went through the streets with growing confidence, and at school they were not afraid. Mendel's new arrogance led him into the only fight he ever had and he was laid low. Aching with humiliation, he shunned Artie Beech and went alone to gaze at the picture of the man rending the lion. It took him a week of hard concentrated thought to realise that the picture and its legend were not to be taken literally, and his close study led him to another and a strangely emotional interest in the picture. His eyes would travel up the line of the man's body along his arms to the lion's jaws, and then down its taut back to its paws clutching the ground.

The two lines springing together, the two forms locked, gave an impression of strength, of tremendous impact, which, as the boy gazed, became so violent as to make his head ache. At the same time he began to develop an appetite for this shock, and unconsciously used his eyes so as to obtain it. It would sometimes spring up in him suddenly, without his knowing the cause of it, when he watched his mother sitting with her hands folded on her stomach, or cooking with her hand—her big, strong, working hand—on a fish or a loaf of bread.

One day in Bishopsgate, that lordly and splendid thoroughfare which led from the dark streets to the glittering world, he came on a man kneeling on the pavement with coloured chalks. First of all the man dusted the stones with his cap, and then he laid another cap full of little pieces of chalk by his side, and then he drew and smudged and smudged and drew until a slice of salmon appeared. By the side of the salmon he drew a glass of beer with a curl of froth on it and a little bunch of flowers. On another stone he drew a ship at sea in a storm, a black and green sea, and a brown and black sky. Mendel watched him enthralled. What a life! What a career! To go out into the streets and make the dull stones lovely with colour! He saw the man look up and down and then lay a penny on the salmon. A fine gentleman passed by and threw down another penny. . . . Oh, certainly, a career! To make the streets lovely, and immediately to be rewarded!

From school Mendel stole some chalk and decorated the stones in the yard at Gun Street. He drew a bottle and an onion and a fish, though this he rather despised, because it was so easy. Always he had amused himself with drawing. As a tiny child, the first time his father went to America he drew a picture of a watch to ask for that to be sent him, and this picture had been kept by his mother. And after that he often drew, but chiefly because it made his father and mother proud of him, and they laughed happily at everything he did. The pavement artist filled him with pride and pleasure in the doing of it: and every minute out of school and away from the Rabbi he devoted to drawing. His brothers bought him a box of colours, and he painted imaginary landscapes of rivers and swans and cows and castles. Every picture he made was treasured by his mother. They seemed to her, as they did to himself, perfectly beautiful. He used his water-colours as though they were oils, and laid them on thick, to get as near the pavement artist's colours as possible. At school there were drawing-lessons, but they seemed to have no relation to this keen private pleasure of his.

In the evenings he would lie on the ground in the kitchen and paint until his eyes and his head ached. Sometimes his perpetual, silent absorption would so exasperate his brothers that they would kick his paints away and make him get up and talk to them. Then he would curse them with all the rich curses of the Yiddish language, and rush away and hide himself; for days he would live in a state of gloom and dark oppression, feeling dimly aware of a difference between him and them which it was beyond his power to explain. He would try to tell his mother what was the matter with him, but she could not understand. His happiness in painting, the keen delight that used to fill him, were to her compensation enough for her anxiety and the stress and strain of her poverty.

His little local fame procured her some relief. At school he won a prize accorded by vote for the most popular boy. This had amazed him, for he had very little traffic with the others, and during playtime used to stand with his back to the wall and his arms folded, staring with unseeing eyes. When his sister asked one of the boys why Mendel had won the vote, the answer she received was: "He *can* draw." As a result his brothers were helped and his mother was able to get work as a sempstress. They were relieved from the poverty that paralyses. They could go from day to day and carry their deficit from week to week. They could afford friends, and the visits of friends on a ceremonious basis, and Abramovich was always trying to interest rich men in the wonderful family.

It was Abramovich who bought Mendel his first box of oil-paints, not so much to give the boy pleasure as with the idea that he might learn to paint portraits from photographs. That, however, was not in the boy's idea. He abandoned his imaginary landscapes and began to paint objects, still in the manner of the pavement artist, thrilled with the discovery that he could more and more exactly reproduce what he saw. He painted a loaf of bread and a cucumber so like the originals that Abramovich was wildly excited and rushed off to bring Mr. Jacobson, a Polish Jew, a timber-merchant and very rich, to see the marvel.

Mendel was unprepared. He sat painting in the kitchen with his mother and Lotte, his younger sister. Abramovich and Mr. Jacobson came in. Jacobson was ruddy, red-haired, with a strange broad face and a flat nose, almost negroid about the nostrils. He wore a frock-coat, a white waistcoat with a cable-chain across it, and rings upon his fingers. Mendel had a horror of him, and was overcome with shyness. Mr. Jacobson put on his spectacles, stared at the picture. "Ye-es," he said. "That bread could be eaten. That cucumber could be cut and put into the soup. The boy is all right. Eh? Ye-es, and a beautiful boy, too." Mendel writhed. Golda was almost as overcome with shyness as he. In silence she produced all the boy's drawings and pictures and laid them before the visitors. Abramovich was loud in his praises, but not too loud, for he knew that Mr. Jacobson loved to talk. And indeed it seemed that Mr. Jacobson would never stop. He stood in the middle of the room and wagged his fat, stumpy hands and held forth:—

"In my country, Mrs. Kühler, there was once a poor boy. He was always drawing. Give him a piece of paper and a pencil and he would draw anything in the world. The teacher at school had to forbid him to draw, for he would learn nothing at all. So one day the teacher could not find that boy. And where do you think they find him? Under the table. The teacher pulled him out and found in his hand a piece of paper —a piece of paper. The teacher looked down at the piece of paper and fainted away. The boy had drawn a picture of the teacher so like that he fainted away. Well, when the teacher came to himself, he said: 'Boy, did you do that?' 'Yes,' said the boy, 'I did that.' 'Then,' said the teacher, 'I will tell you what you must do. You must paint a portrait of the King and take it to the King, and he will give you money, and carriages, and houses, and rings, and watches, for you and your father, and your uncles and all your family.' Ahin and aher. The boy did that. He painted a portrait of the King and he took it to the palace. He went to the front door and knock, knock, knock. A lady opened the door and she said: 'What do you want, little boy?' 'I want to see the King. I have something to show him.' 'I am the Queen,' said the lady. 'You can show it to me.' The boy showed the picture and the Queen fainted away. The servants and the King came running in to see what had happened, and they stood like stone. 'Who did that?' said the King. 'I did,' said the boy. 'I don't believe him,' said the King. 'Shut him up for a day and a night, give him paint and brushes, and we will see what he can do.' Well, they shut the boy up for a day and a night, and in the morning the door was opened and the King and the Queen came in. The King took off his hat and put it on the table and it fell to the ground. That boy had painted a picture of a table so like that the King thought it was a real table and tried to put his hat on it. It is true, and the boy painted the King's portrait every Saturday until he died, and he had houses and money and footmen and statues in his garden, and his father and mother drove in their carriages and wore sables even in the summer. And some day, Mrs. Kühler, we shall see you in your carriage and this boy painting the portrait of the King."

The story was received in silence. The emotions it aroused in Golda and her son were so profound, so violent that they were dazed. The tension was relieved by a giggle from Lotte, who knew that kings do not wear hats. Mendel sat staring at his picture, which, try as he would, he could not connect with the story.

Abramovich said: "I told you so, Mrs. Kühler. I told you something would come of it." Already he was convinced that Mendel only had to go out into London to make the family's fortune.

But Golda replied: "There's time enough for that, and don't go putting ideas into the boy's head."

There was no danger of that. Mendel's was not the kind of head into which ideas are easily put. He was slow of comprehension, powerful in his instincts, and everything he perceived had to be referred to them. School was to him a perfectly extraneous experience. What he learned there was of so little use to any purpose of which he was conscious, and it could not be shared with his mother. To her schooling was the law of the land. A strange force took her boy from her every day and, as it were, imprisoned him. When he was fourteen he would be free. She must endure his captivity as she had learned to endure so much else.

When Mr. Jacobson had gone she said: "There have been boys like that, and a good boy never forgets his father and mother."

Mendel looked puzzled and said: "When *I* drew a picture of teacher he caned me."

"Caned you?" cried Golda, horrified.

"He often does."

"Thrashed you!" cried Golda; "on the hands?"

"No," replied Mendel, "on the seat and the back."

Golda made him undress, and she gave a gasp of anger when she saw the weals and bruises on his back. "But what did you do?" she cried.

"I don't know," answered Mendel. This was true. At school he would suddenly find the teacher towering over him in a fury; he would be told to stay behind, and then he would be flogged. He had suffered more from the humiliation than from the pain inflicted. He could never understand why this fury should descend upon him out of his happy dreams. And now as his mother wept over the marks upon his body the suffering in him was released. All the feeling suppressed in him by his inability to understand came tearing out of him and he shook with rage. He could find no words to express these new emotions, which were terrible and frightened him.

Lotte came up and felt the weals on his back with her fingers, and she said: "They don't do that to girls."

"Be quiet, Lotte," said Golda. "Don't touch him. You will hurt him." And she stood staring in amazement at the boy's back. "That's an awful mess," she said to herself, and her thoughts flew back to men who had been flogged by the soldiers in Austria. But this was England, where everybody was left alone. She could not understand it. She did not know what to do. The boy could not be kept from school, for they would come and drag him to it. There were often dreadful scenes in Gun Street when children were dragged off to school. She made Lotte sit at the table and write: "Please, teacher, you must not beat my son. His back is like a railway-line, and it is not good to beat children." She could think of no threat which could intimidate the teacher, no power she could invoke to her aid. Her powerlessness appalled her. She signed the letter and thought she would go to the Rabbi and ask him what she must do. "Yes," she said, "the Rabbi will tell me, and perhaps the Rabbi will write to the teacher also." She could feel the torture in the boy, and she knew that it must be stopped. It was all very well to knock Harry or Issy about. They could put up with any amount of violence. But Mendel was different. With him pain went so deep. That was what made it horrible. He was like a very little child. It was wicked to hurt him. His silence now was almost more than she could bear.

There came a knock at the door. Lotte went to open it and gave a little scream. It was her father come back from America. He came into the room, not different by a hair from when he went away; thinner, perhaps, a little more haggard and hollow under the eyes, so that the slight squint in his right eye, injured to avoid conscription, was more pronounced. He came in as though he had returned from his day's work, nodded to his wife, and looked at the boy's back.

"Who has done that?" he asked.

"At school," replied Golda. "The teacher."

Jacob took off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, picked up a chair and smashed it on the floor. Mendel put on his shirt and coat again and said: "It is like when you knocked the soldier over with the glass."

Jacob gave a roar: "Ah, you remember that? Ah! yes. That was when I had the inn near the barracks. He was an officer. Two of them came in. They were drunk, the swine! The man made for your mother and the officer for your sister. The glasses were big, with a heavy base. I took one of them . . ."

"And the man spun round three times and fell flat on the floor," said Mendel.

"Ah! you remember that? Yes. And I lifted him out into the street and left him there in the snow. I was a strong man then. I wanted nothing from them, but if they touch what is mine . . . !" He seized Mendel and lifted him high over his head. He was tremendously excited and could not be got to sit down or to talk of his doings in America or of his voyage. That was his way. He would talk in his own time. His doings would come out piecemeal, over years and years. Now he was entirely absorbed with his fury. He was nearly ill with it and could not eat. Up and down the room he walked, lashing up his rage. Mendel was sent to bed, and until he went to sleep he could hear his father pacing up and down and his mother talking, explaining, entreating.

Next morning Mendel had almost forgotten the excitement and went to school as usual. In the middle of an arithmetic lesson in walked Jacob, very white, with his head down. He went quickly up to the teacher and spoke to him quietly. The class was stunned into silence. Jacob raised his fist and the teacher went down. Jacob picked him up, shook him, and threw him into a corner. Then he shouted: "You won't touch my boy again!" shook himself like a dog, and walked out, closing the door very quietly. The teacher hurried out and did not return. The class slowly recovered from its astonishment, shrill voices grew out of the silence like a strong wind, and books and inkpots began to fly. Soon the walls were streaked and spattered with ink and when it became known that it was Kühler's father who had done it, Mendel found himself a hero. But he took no pride in it. He was haunted by the teacher's white, terrified face. He had always thought of the teacher as a nice man. The thrashings inflicted on him had always seemed to him impersonal and outside humanity altogether. Yet because it was his father who had thrashed the teacher he accepted it as right. At home his father, even in his absence, was the law, and could do no wrong. The violent scene seemed to Mendel to have nothing to do with himself, and he resented having become the centre of attention.

The head master hurried in, quelled the class, went on with the lesson where it had been interrupted. Mendel could not attend. He was bewildered by a sudden realisation of life outside himself. It was no longer a procession of events, figures, scenes, colours, shapes, light and darkness passing before his eyes, always charming, sometimes terrifying, but something violent which met another something in himself with a fearful impact. It could hurt him, and he knew that it was merciless, for the thing in himself that answered to it and rushed out to meet it was wild and knew no mercy either. He had heard of a thing called the maelstrom in the sea, a kind of spout, with whirling sides, down which great ships were sucked. And he felt that he was being sucked down such a spout, in which he could see all that he had ever known, the mountain and the river in Austria, the train, the telegraph wires, towns, buses, faces, the street, the school, Artie Beech, Abramovich, his father. . . . Only his mother stood firm, and from her came a force to counteract that other force which was dragging him towards the whirlpool.

He became conscious of the discomfort in which he lived and was acutely aware of the people by whom he was surrounded.

CHAPTER III

PRISON

THIS time in America Jacob had fared better, and by dint of half-starving himself and sleeping when he had nothing to do, he had managed to save over fifty pounds. Abramovich borrowed another fifty, and once again they set up in business as furriers. They took one of the old Georgian houses off Bishopsgate, started a workshop in the top rooms, and in the lower rooms the Kühler family lived, with Abramovich in lodgings round the corner. They were only twenty yards from the synagogue and Golda was happy; Jacob too, for in such a house he felt a solid man. And, indeed, amid the extreme poverty with which they were surrounded he could pass for wealthy. He had his name on a brass plate on the door and was always proud when he wrote it on a cheque. He took his eldest son into his workshop to rescue him from the fate of working for another master, and he assumed a patriarchal authority over his family. His sons were never allowed out after half-past nine, and, tall youths though they were, if they crossed his will he thrashed them. The girls were forbidden to go out alone. They were kept at home to await their fate.

The eldest boy flung all his ardour into dancing, and was the champion slow waltzer of the neighbourhood.

With egg-shells on his heels to show that he never brought them to the ground, he could keep it up for hours and won many prizes. Harry scorned this polite prowess. For him the romance of the streets was irresistible: easy amorous conquests, battles of tongues and fists, visits to the prize-ring, upon which his young ambition centred. A bout between a Jew and a Christian would lead to a free-fight in the audience, for the Jews yelled in Yiddish to their champion, and the British would suspect insults to them or vile instructions, and would try to enforce silence . . . And Harry would bring gruff young men to the house, youths with puffy eyes and swollen or crooked or broken noses, and he would treat them with an enthusiastic deference which found no echo in any member of the family save Mendel, who found the world opened up to him by Harry large and adventurous, like the open sea stretching away and away from the whirlpool.

There was one extraordinarily nice man whom Harry brought to the house. His name was Kuit, and he had failed as a boxer and had become a thief, a trade in which he was an expert. His talk fascinated Mendel, and indeed the whole family. None could fail to listen when he told of his adventures and his skill. He had begun as a pickpocket, plying his trade in Bishopsgate or the Mile End Road, and to show his expertise he would run his hands over Jacob's pockets without his feeling it, and tell him what they contained. Or he would ask Golda to let him see her purse, and she would grope for it only to find that he had already taken it. He had advanced from picking pockets to the higher forms of theft: plundering hotels or dogging diamond merchants, and he was keenly interested in America.

It was through him that the family knew the little that was ever revealed to them of Jacob's doings there.

Kuit said he would go to America and not return until he had ten thousand pounds, all made by honest theft, for he would only rob the rich, and, indeed, he was most generous with his earnings, and gave Golda many handsome pieces of jewellery, and he lent Jacob money when he badly needed it. That, however, was not Jacob's reason for admitting Kuit to his family circle. He liked the man, was fascinated by him, and thought his morals were his own affair. He knew his race and the poor too well to be squeamish, and never dreamed of extending his authority beyond his family. He warned Harry that if he took to Kuit's practices he would no longer be a son of his, and as the accounts of prison given to Harry by some of his acquaintances were not cheering, Harry preferred not to run any risks. Instead, he devoted himself to training for the glory of the prize-ring.

For Mendel the moral aspect of Kuit's profession had been settled once and for all by his seeing the Rabbi with his face turned to the wall, in the middle of the most terrible of prayers, filch some pennies from an overcoat. Religion therefore was one thing, life was another, and life included theft. Kuit was the only man who could think of painting apart from money, and it was Kuit who gave him a new box of oil colours, stolen from a studio which he broke into on purpose, and *en passant* from one rich house in Kensington to another. Kuit used to say: "One thing is true for one man and another for another. And what is true for a man is what he does best. For Harry it is boxing, for Issy it is women and dancing, and for Mr. Kühler it is being honest. For me it is showing the business thieves that they cannot have things all their own way, and outwitting the police. Oh yes! They know me and I know them, but they will never catch me."

So charming was Mr. Kuit that Jacob could not object to taking care from time to time of the property that passed through his hands, and the kitchen was often splendid with marble clocks and Oriental china and Sheffield plate, which never looked anything but out of place among the cheap oleographs and the sideboard with its green paper frills round the flashing gilt china that was never used. The kitchen was the living-room of the house, for Jacob only ate when he was hungry, and it was rarely that two sat down to a meal together.

As often as not Mendel had his paints on the table, and the objects he was painting were not to be moved. He clung to his painting as the only comfort in his distress, and he would frequently work away with his brushes though he could hardly see what he was at, and knew that he was entirely devoid of the feeling that until the discomfort broke out in his soul had never failed him. He dared not look outside his circumstances for comfort, and within them was the most absolute denial of that cherished feeling for loveliness and colour. Beyond certain streets he never ventured. He felt lost outside the immediate neighbourhood of his home, and only Mr. Kuit reassured him with the confidence with which he spoke of such remote regions as Kensington and Bayswater and Mayfair. The rest clung to the little district where the shops and the language and the smells were Jewish. Yet there, too, Mendel felt lost, though he had an immense reverence for the old Jews, for the Rabbis who pored all day long over their books, and the ancient bearded men who, like his mother, could sit for hours together doing nothing at all. He loved their tragic, wrinkled faces and their steadfast peace, so stark a contrast to the chatter and the wrangling and the harshness that filled his home.

There were constant rows. Harry upset the household for weeks after his father forbade him to pursue his prize-fighting ambitions. Jacob would not have a son of his making a public show of himself. To that disturbance was added another when Issy began to court, or was courted by, a girl who was thought too poor and base-born. If he was out a minute later than half-past nine Jacob would go out and find him at the corner of the street with the girl in his arms. Issy would be dragged away. Then he would sulk or shout that he was a man, and Jacob would tell him in a cold, furious voice that he could go if he liked, but, if he went, he must never show his face there again. For a time Issy would submit. Poor though the home was, he could not think of leaving it except to make another for himself. But there was no keeping the girl away, and he would be for ever peeping into the street to see if she were there, and if she were he could not keep away from her.

Leah, the eldest girl, had her courtships too. The match-makers were busy with her, and a number of men, young and old, were brought to view her. She was dressed up to look fine, and Jacob and Golda would sit together to inspect the suitors, and at last they chose a huge, ugly Russian Jew, named Moscowitsch—Abraham Moscowitsch, a timber-merchant, who had pulled himself up out of the East End and had a house at Hackney. He was a friend of Kuit's and was willing to take the girl without a dowry. Leah hid herself away and wept. It was in vain that Golda, primed by Jacob, told her that she would be rich, and would have servants and carriages, and could buy at the great shops:

she could not forget the Russian's bristling hair and thick lips and coarse, splayed nostrils. The tears were of no avail; the marriage had been offered and accepted. The wedding was fixed, and nothing was spared to make it a social triumph. The bride was decked out in conventional English white, with a heavy veil and a bouquet: and very lovely she looked. Jacob wore his first frock-coat and a white linen collar, Golda had a dress made of mauve cashmere, with a bodice heavily adorned with shining beads, and Mendel had a new sailor suit with a mortar-board cap. There were three carriages to drive the party the twenty yards to the synagogue. The wedding group was photographed, and a hall was taken for the feast and the dance in the evening. The wedding cost Jacob the savings of many years and more, but he grudged not a penny of it, because he had a rich son-in-law and wished it to be known. There were over fifty guests at the feast.

Within a week Leah came home again, pale, thin, and shrunken. Moscowitsch had been arrested. He had gone bankrupt and had done "something with his books."

"Bankrupt!" said Jacob; "bankrupt!"

He stood in front of his weeping daughter and beat against the air with his clenched fists. She moaned and protested that she would never go back to him. Jacob shook her till her teeth chattered together.

"You dare talk like that! He is your husband. You are his wife. It is a misfortune. You should be with the lawyers to find out when you can see him. I am to lose everything because he is unfortunate! A dog will not turn from a man in his misery, and must a woman learn from a dog? You are a soft girl! Go, I say, and find out when you can see him. Was ever a man so crossed by Fate! Where I go, there luck takes wings."

His violence shook Leah out of the dazed misery in which she had come home, having no other idea, no other place to which to go. Jacob was at first for making his daughter wait in her new home until her husband was returned to her. His simple imagination seized on the idea and visualised it. It seemed to him admirable, and Golda had hard work to shake it out of his head. As a piece of unnecessary cruelty he could not realise it, but when it was brought home to him that he would have to pay the rent of the house in Hackney, he yielded and allowed the girl to stay at home.

Moscowitsch was sentenced to six months' imprisonment, and a gloom, such as not the darkest days of poverty had been able to create, descended upon the house. Jacob was ashamed and irritable. He insisted upon the most scrupulous observance of all the rites of his religion, and he forbade Mendel to paint. Painting had nothing to do with religion and he would have none of it. He trampled on Mendel's friendship with Artie Beech. The Christian world of police and judges and the law had destroyed his happiness, and not the faintest smell of Christendom should cross his door. Friction between the father and his two sons was exasperated, and it seemed to Mendel that Hell was let loose. He was nearly of an age to leave school, and he dreamed by the hour of the freedom he would have when he went to work. He would go out early in the morning and come home late in the evening. He would stay in the streets and look at the shops and watch the girls go by. He would go one day out beyond London to see what the world was like there. He would find a place where there were pictures, and he would feast ✓

on them: for when he went to work he would paint no more, since painting would be shed with the miserable childhood that was so fast slipping away from him.

Yet a worse calamity was to happen. Once again the Christian world of police, law, and judges was to invade the home of the Kühlers, and this time it was Jacob himself who was taken. He was charged with receiving stolen goods. A detective-inspector and two constables invaded the house and took possession of an ormolu clock, a number of silver knives, and a brooch which Mr. Kuit had given to Golda. Five of Mr. Kuit's friends had been arrested, but Mr. Kuit himself was not implicated. He paid for the defence of the prisoners and took charge of the Kühler family, transferred the business into Issy's name, and advanced money to keep it going. He spared neither time nor trouble to try to establish Jacob's innocence, but it looked almost as though some one else was taking an equal amount of trouble to prove his guilt, for every move of Mr. Kuit's was countered, and Jacob himself was so bewildered and enraged that he could not give a coherent answer to the questions put to him. He babbled and raved of an enemy who had done this thing, of a rival who had plotted his ruin, but as he could not give a satisfactory account of the articles found in his possession, his passionate protestations and his fanatical belief in his own honesty were of no avail. From the dock in which he was placed with Mr. Kuit's other friends he delivered a vehement harangue in broken English, not more than ten words of which were intelligible to the judge and jury. The judge was kindly, the jury somnolent. Jacob was the only member of the party with a clean record, and he received the light sentence of eighteen months; the rest had double that term and more. In the Sunday papers they were described as a dangerous gang, and their portraits were drawn like profiles on a coin by an artist whose business it was to make villains look villainous for the delectation of the sober millions who tasted the joys of wickedness only in print. Golda was staggered by the blank indifference of the world to her husband's honesty. His word to her was law, but the judge and the newspapers swept it aside, and he was regarded as one with the wicked men whose crooked dealings had involved the innocent. This was the worst disaster that had ever broken upon her: husband and son-in-law both swept away from her, as it seemed now, in one moment. The sympathy she received from the neighbours touched her profoundly, and she accepted their view that the sudden abstraction of male relatives was a natural calamity, like sickness or fire. Thanks to Mr. Kuit the business would be kept together, and thanks to Abramovich she never lacked company. That faithful friend would come in in the evenings and go over the trial, every moment of which he had heard, and recount every word of Jacob's speech, which to him was a piece of magnificent oratory. "Not a tear was left in my eyes," he said. "Not a throb was left in my heart, and the judge was moved, for his face sank into his hands and I could see that he knew how unjust he must be." And he spent many days ferreting out a villain to be the cause of it all, some inveterate, implacable enemy who had plotted the downfall of the most honest man in London. He fixed on a certain Mr. Rosenthal, who years ago had tried to sell them machines for the business when they had already bought all that were necessary. He was quite sure it was Mr. Rosenthal who had bribed the thieves to hold their tongues, when any one of them could have cleared Jacob in a moment. And Golda believed that it was Mr. Rosenthal and dreamed of unattainable acts of revenge.

Mendel used to listen to them talking, and their voices seemed to him to come from very far away. The upheaval had stunned him, had destroyed his volition and paralysed his dreams. He felt as though a tight band were fixed round his head. He had neither desire nor will. The world could do as it liked with him. If the world could suddenly invade his home and brand its head and lawgiver as thief, then the world was empty and foolish and it did not matter what happened. It amazed him that his brothers and sisters could go about as usual: that Harry could come home and talk of prize-fighters and sit writing to girls, and that Issy could go out to meet his Rosa at the corner of the street. It was astonishing that his mother could still cook and they could still eat, and that every morning Harry could go down and open the door to let in the workpeople to clatter up the stairs. . . . And Harry disliked getting out of bed in the morning. In his father's absence he ventured to apply his considerable ingenuity to the problem, and rigged up a wire from his bed to the knob of the front-door. Nor was this the only sign of the removal of the centre of authority from the family, for Issy actually brought his girl Rosa to the house and made his mother be pleasant to her. . . . Golda felt that her children were growing beyond her, and she thought it was time Issy was thinking of getting married, though not to Rosa, whose father was a poor cobbler and could give her no money.

At regular intervals Golda swallowed down her dread of the busy streets and went to Pentonville, where through the bars of the visitors'-room Jacob received her report and gave his instructions. He decreed against

Rosa, who accordingly was forbidden to enter the house again. He had orders for every one of his children except Mendel, as to whom Golda did not consult him. Deep in her inmost heart she was in revolt against her husband, for she had begun to see that he had carried pride to the point of folly, and all her hopes, all her dreams, all her ambitions were centred upon her darling boy. Her ambitions were not worldly. She knew nothing at all about the world, and did not believe three parts of what she heard of it. Only she longed for him to escape the bitterness and bareness that had been her portion. The boy was so beautiful and could be so gay and could dance so lightly, and would sometimes be so tempestuous and masterful. It would be a sin if he were to be cramped over a board or were sent to work in a tailoring shop. She herself had a love of flowers and of moonlight and the stars shining through the smoky sky, and she would sometimes find herself being urged to the use of strange words, which would make Mendel raise his head and cock his ears as though he were listening to the very beat of her heart. To that no one in the world had ever listened, and her life seemed very full and worthy when Mendel in his childish fashion was awake to it. . . . Pentonville seemed to suit Jacob. He looked almost fat and said the cocoa was very good.

The time came for Mendel to leave school and Issy said he had better be taken into the workshop. Harry wanted him in the timber-yard in which he loafed away his days. Abramovich was for getting Mr. Jacobson to take him into his office, for Mr. Jacobson never failed to ask after the boy who painted the pictures. Now it so happened that Mendel had found a bookshop, outside which he had discovered a life of W. P. Frith, R.A.

In daily visits over a period of three weeks he had read it from cover to cover, the story of a poor boy who had become an artist, rising to such fame that he had painted the portrait of the Queen. There it was in print, and must be true. Mr. Jacobson's boy was only in a story, but here it was set down in a book, with reproductions of the artist's wonderful pictures—"The Railway Station," "Derby Day." The book said they were wonderful. The book spoke with reverence and enthusiasm of pictures and the men who painted them.

With tremulous excitement he secretly produced his box of paints again, and squeezed out the colours on to the plate he used for a palette. He adored the colours and amused himself with painting smooth strips of blue, yellow, green, red, orange, grey, for the sheer delight of handling the delicious stuff. It was a new pleasure, the joy of colours in themselves without reference to any object, or any feeling inside himself except this simple thrilling delight. He could forget everything in it, for it was his first taste of childish glee. Nothing would ever be the same again. Nothing could ever again so oppress and overwhelm him as distasteful and even pleasant things had done in the past. He would be an artist, a wonderful artist, like W. P. Frith, R.A.

So when he was called into the kitchen one night and they told him he was to go into Mr. Jacobson's office, he looked as though their words had no meaning for him, and he said:—

"I want to be an artist."

An artist? Nobody knew quite what that meant. Golda thought it meant painting pictures, but she could not imagine a man devoting all his time to it—a child's pastime.

"He means the drawing!" said Abramovich. "I had a friend at home who used to paint the flowers on the cups."

"I'm going to be an artist," said Mendel.

"But you've got to make your money like everybody else," replied Issy.

Mendel retorted with details of what he could remember of the career of his idol. Issy said that was a *Christlicher kop.* There weren't such things as Jewish artists; whereon Harry threw in the word "Rubinstein." Asked to explain what he meant, he did not know, but had just remembered the name.

Abramovich said he thought Rubinstein was a conductor at the Opera, and there were Jewish singers and actors.

"My father," said Harry, "won't hear of that. He won't have a son of his making a public show of himself."

Mendel by this time was white in the face, and his eyes were glaring out of his head. He knew that not one of them had understood his meaning, and he felt that Issy was bent on having his way with him. He was in despair at his helplessness, and at last, when he could endure no more, he flung himself down on the floor and howled. Issy lost his temper with him, picked him up, and carried him, kicking and biting, upstairs, and flung him on his bed.

The subject was dropped for a time, but Mendel refused to eat, or to sleep, or to leave the house. He was afraid that if he put his nose outside the door Abramovich would pounce on him and drag him off to Mr. Jacobson's office.

However, the matter could not be postponed for long, because money was very scarce and the boy must be put into the way of providing for himself. Golda asked Abramovich to find out what an artist was and how much a week could be made at the trade. Abramovich came in one evening with a note-book full of facts and figures. He had read of a picture being sold for tens of thousands of pounds, and this had made a great impression on him. Mendel was called down from the room in which he had exiled himself.

"Well?" said Abramovich kindly. "So you want to be an artist? But how?"

"I don't know. I shall paint pictures."

"But who will feed you? Who will buy you paints, brushes?"

"I shall sell my pictures."

"Where, then? How?"

"To the shops."

"Where are the shops? Tell me of any shop near here, for I don't know a single one."

Again Mendel felt that they were too clever for him, and he was on the brink of another fit of despair when, fortunately for him, Mr. Macalister, a commercial traveller in furs, came in. When he was in London he made a point of calling on the Kühlers, whom he liked, much as he liked strong drink. He was a man of some attainments, a student of Edinburgh, who had found the ordinary walks and the ordinary people of life too tame for his chaotic and vigorous temper, and he went from place to place collecting just such strange people as these Polacks, as he used to call them. He looked for passion in men and women, and accepted it gratefully and even greedily wherever he found it. . . . He had red hair and a complexion like a white-heart cherry, with little twinkling eyes as blue as forget-me-nots.

He kindled at once to the passion with which Mendel was bursting, stooped over Golda's hand and kissed it

—for he knew that was how foreigners greeted a lady—and then he sat heavily waiting for the situation to be explained to him. Mendel instinctively appealed to him. . . . Oh yes! he knew what an artist was, and some painters had made tidy fortunes, though they were not the best of them. There were Reynolds, and Lawrence, and Raeburn, and Landseer, and some young fellows at Glasgow, and Michael Angelo—a tidy lot, indeed. Never a Jew, that he had heard of.

"I told you so!" said Abramovich.

Golda showed Mr. Macalister the boy's pictures, and he was genuinely impressed, especially by a picture of three oranges in a basket.

"It's not," he said, "that they make you want to eat them, as that they make you look at them as you look at oranges. I'll look closer at every orange I see now. That's talent. Yes. That's talent. Aye."

Mendel was so grateful to him that he forgot the others and began to point out to him how well the oranges were painted, with all their fleshiness and rotundity brought out. And very soon they were all laughing at him, and that made the meeting happier.

Mr. Macalister explained that in old days artists used to take boys into their studios, but that now there were Schools of Art where only very talented people could survive. He certainly thought that Mendel ought to be given a chance, and if it were a question of money, he, poor though he was, would be only too glad to help. Golda would not hear of that, and Abramovich protested that, in an unhappy time like this, he regarded himself as the representative of his unfortunate friend.

The corner was turned. Feeling was now all with Mendel, and he went to bed singing in head and heart: "I'm an artist! I'm an artist! I'm an artist!"

So the ball was set rolling. Jacob, seen behind the bars, raised no objection. He had had time to think, and, to the extent of his capacity, availed himself of it. When he was told that his youngest son wanted to be an artist and wept at the suggestion of anything else, he thought: "Who am I to say 'Yea' or 'Nay'?" and he said "Yea." "Let the boy have a little happiness while he may, for the Christians are very powerful and will take all that he cherishes from him."

The question of ways and means was considered, and here Abe Moscowitsch took charge. His business had prospered during his enforced absence, and his bankruptcy had been very profitable. He was a decent man, and anxious to make amends to his young wife and her family for the trouble his adventurousness had brought on them. To please her he took a new house with bow-windows and a garage, and to please them he jumped at the opportunity of helping Mendel, and offered to pay his fees at a School of Art. When the boy heard this he ran to his brother-in-law's office and, before all his workmen, flung his arms round his neck and embraced him.

"That'll do. That'll do," said Moscowitsch. "Don't forget us if you're a rich man before I am."

"I shall never leave home," said Mendel. "I shall never marry. I shall live all my days with my mother, painting."

There arose the difficulty that no one had ever heard of a School of Art. Mr. Macalister was deputed to look into the matter. He inquired, and was recommended to the Polytechnic as being cheap and good, and the Polytechnic was decided on.

Mr. Kuit came in at the tail of all this excitement, and added to it by saying that he was just off to America, first-class by the Cunard Line, for he was going to start in style, live in style, and come back in style. He was delighted to hear of the brilliant future opening up before Mendel, and told wonderful stories of famous pictures that had been stolen, cut out of their frames and taken away under the very noses of the owners. He was wonderfully overdressed, not loudly or vulgarly, but through his eagerness to be and to look first-class. He produced a pack of cards and showed how he could shuffle them to suit himself, and three times out of five, through the fineness of the touch, he could "spot" a card. He was a wonderful man. The Kühlers gaped at him, and Moscowitsch, in emulation, was led on to brag of his smartness in business, and how he had thrice burned down his timber-yard and made the insurance people pay up. Yet, though he warmed up as he boasted, he lacked the magic of Mr. Kuit and could not conceal the meanness of his deeds behind their glamour. He lumbered along like a great bear behind Mr. Kuit, and was vexed because he could not overtake him, and when the glittering little Jew, who seemed more magician than thief, said he would give Mendel a new suit of clothes for his entry into the world of art, Moscowitsch promised to provide a new pair of boots. Mr. Kuit countered with two new hats, Moscowitsch with underclothes. On they went in competition until Mendel was magnificently equipped, and at last Moscowitsch laid two new sovereigns on the table and said they were for the boy's pocket-money. Not to be outdone, Mr. Kuit produced a five-pound note and gave it to Golda to be put into the Post Office Savings Bank.

In her inmost heart Golda was alarmed. For the first time she began to realise the vast powerful London with which she was surrounded. At home, in Austria, people stole because they were poor, because they were starving. She herself had often sent Harry and Issy out into the market with a sack and a spiked stick with which to pick up potatoes and cabbages and bread, but here the old simplicity was lacking. The swagger and the magnitude of Mr. Kuit's operations and her son-in-law's frauds alarmed her, and she felt that no good could come of it. They belonged to some power which moved too fast for her, and it was being invoked for Mendel, her youngest-born, her treasure. Truly it was a black day that took Jacob from her. Where he was, there was simplicity. Everything was kept in its place when he was in authority. Everything was kept down on the earth. There was the good smell of the earth in all his dealings, all his emotions. Never in him was the easy fantastic excitement of Kuit and Moscowitsch. . . . They were mad. Surely they were mad. Their excitement infected everybody. Golda could feel it creeping in her veins like a poison. It came from the world to which these men belonged, the world of prison. That one word expressed it all for Golda. She had only been out into it to go to the prison, and to her that seemed to be the cold empty centre of it all. The bustle and glitter of the streets led to the prison, and she had always to fight to get back into her own life, where things were simple and definite—ugly, maybe—but clear and actual. . . . And now into that world of hectic excitement playing about the prison and about Mendel was to go, to be she knew not what, to learn to play with brushes and colours, to practise tricks which seemed to her not essentially different from Mr. Kuit's sleight with the cards. She was sure no good could come of it; but for the present the boy had his happiness, and to that she yielded.

CHAPTER IV

FIRST LOVE

FOR Mendel every day became romantic, though he suffered tortures of shyness and used to bolt like a rabbit through the doors of the Polytechnic, rush upstairs to his easel, and never raise his eyes from it except to gaze at the objects placed before him. He worked in a frenzy, convinced that it was his business to translate the object on to the canvas. When he had done that he felt that the object had no further existence. It ought to vanish as completely as his consuming interest in it. As a matter of fact, it never did vanish, but it was lost in the praises of Mr. Sivwright, and the young women and old ladies who attended the class. The first task set the class after he joined it was a ginger-beer bottle, of which his rendering was declared to be a marvel, even to the high light on the marble in the neck of the bottle.

He was rather small for his age and was almost absurdly beautiful, with his curly hair, round Austrian head, and amusing pricked ears. His eyes were set very wide apart. They were blue. His nose was straight, and very slightly tip-tilted, and his lips were as delicately modelled as the petals of a rose. They were always tremulous as he shrank under the vivid impressions that poured in on him in bewildering profusion.

He began to grow physically and spiritually, though not at all mentally, and he lived in a state of bewilderment, retaining shrewdness enough to cling to the necessary plain fact that he was at the school to be a success, for if he failed he would sink back into the already detestable world inhabited by Issy and Harry.

He created quite a stir at the school. Mr. Sivwright, a Lancashire Scotsman, whose youthful revolt against commerce and grime had carried him in the direction of art only so far as the municipal school, said he was an infant prodigy and made a show of him. To Mendel's disgust Mr. Sivwright assured the other pupils that he was a Pole. This was his first intimation that there was, in the splendid free Christian world, a prejudice against Jews. He was rather shocked and disgusted, for never in his life had he found occasion to call anything by other than its right name. It took him weeks to conquer his shyness sufficiently to protest.

"I am a Jew," he said to Mr. Sivwright. "Why do you call me a Pole?"

"Well," said Mr. Sivwright, "there's Chopin, you know, and Paderewski, don't you know, and Kosciusko, and the Jews don't stand for anything but money. And, after all, you do come from Poland."

"But I am a Jew."

"You don't look it, and there's some swing about being a Pole. There's no swing about being a Jew. It stops dead, you know. I don't know why it is, but it stops dead."

The words frightened Mendel. How awful it would be if he were to stop dead, to reach the Polytechnic and to go no further!

He was soon taken beyond the Polytechnic, for Mr. Sivwright led him to the National Gallery and showed him the treasures there. The boy was at once prostrate before Greuze. Ah! there were softness, tenderness, charm: all that he had lacked and longed for. It was in vain that Mr. Sivwright took him to the Van Eycks and the Teniers and the Franz Hals, striking an attitude and saying: "Fine! Dramatic! That's the real stuff!" The boy would return to his Greuze and pour out on the pretty maidens all the longings for emotion with which he was filled, and the yearning seemed to him to be the irresistible torrent of art which carried those who felt it to the pinnacles of fame. . . . Yet he knew that Mr. Sivwright was a shoddy failure of a man, and he knew that Mr. Sivwright's ecstasies were forced and had small connection with the pictures before him. He also knew that he had not the least desire to paint like Greuze, but he could not resist the fascination of the pretty maidens and the gush of feeling he had in front of them. The Italians he did not understand and Velasquez and El Greco repelled him. Also, the pictures as a whole excited him so that they ran into each other and he could not extricate them, and Greuze became his stand-by. He felt safe with Greuze.

Every day he used to go home and tell his mother of the day's doings, from the moment when he mounted the bus in the morning to the time when he walked home in the evening. He gave her minute accounts of all the people in the class, of the cheap restaurant where he had lunch, of the marvels of the streets: the old women selling flowers at Oxford Circus; the gorgeous shop-windows; the illuminated signs and advertisements, green, red, and yellow; the theatres; the posters of the comic men outside the music-halls; the rich people in their motor-cars; the marvellous ladies in their silks and their furs; the poor men selling matches; the scarlet soldiers and blue sailors; the big policemen who stopped the traffic with their white hands; the awful, endless desolation of Portland Place, with trees—actually trees—at the end of it; the whirl, the glitter, the roar, the splendour of London. And he used to mimic for her the strange people he saw, the mincing ladies and the lordly shopwalkers, the tittering girls and the men working in the streets. The more excited he was the more depressed was Golda. What was it all for? Why could not people live a decent quiet life? Why was all this whirligig revolving round the prison? . . . But she smiled and laughed and applauded him, and believed him when he said none of the Christians could draw as well as he.

He began to win prizes. It became his whole object to beat the Christians. What they told him to paint he would paint better than any of them. And by sheer will and concentration he succeeded.

Mr. Sivwright said there was no holding him, and very soon declared he had nothing more to learn.

This was taken by Mendel and his family to mean that he was now an artist. In all good faith he established himself in a room below the workshop at home, called it his studio, and set to work. For a few months he painted apples, fish, oranges, portraits of his mother, brothers, and sisters, and for a time was able to sell them among his acquaintance. He had one or two commissions for portraits and could always make a few shillings by painting from photographs. But appreciation of art among his own people was limited; he soon came to an end of it, and there was that other world calling to him. Art lay beyond that other world. He felt sure of that. It lay beyond Mr. Sivwright. If he stayed among his own people he would stop dead; for he knew now that it was true that the Jews stopped dead.

And then to his horror he stopped. For no reason at all his skill, his enthusiasm, his eagerness left him. He forced himself to paint, transferred innumerable idiotic faces from photographs to cigar-box lids, made his mother neglect her work to sit to him, bribed Lotte to be his model, but hated and loathed everything that he did. He was listless, sometimes feverish, sometimes leaden and cold. Often he thought he was going to die—to die before anything had happened, before anything had emerged from the chaos of his painful vivid impressions.

To make things worse, his father came home and said that he would give him six months in which to make his living, and at the end of that time, if he had failed, he would have to go into the workshop.

He felt hopeless. He went to see Mr. Sivwright and poured out his woes to him, who wrote a letter to Jacob saying that his son was a genius and would be one of the greatest of painters. Jacob said: "What is a genius? I do not know. I know what a man is, and a man works for his living. In six months, if you can make fifteen shillings a week I will believe in this painting. If not, what is there to believe? What will you do when you are to marry, heh? Tell me that. Will your little tubes of paint keep a wife, heh? Tell me that."

Mendel could say nothing. He could do nothing. He gave up even trying to paint, for he might as well have played with mud-pies. He borrowed money from his brothers and prowled about the streets, and went to the National Gallery. Greuze meant nothing to him now. He began to feel, very faintly, the force of Michael Angelo, but the rest only filled him with despair. He knew nothing—nothing at all. He could not even begin to see how the pictures were painted. They were miraculous and detestable. . . . He went home and comforted himself with a little picture of some apples on a plate. He had painted it two years before in an ecstasy—a thrilling love for the form, the colour, the texture of the fruit and the china. It was good. He knew it was good, but he knew he could do nothing like it now—never again, perhaps.

And how disgusting the streets had become! Such a litter, such a noise, such aimless, ugly people! He could understand his mother's horror of them. Ah! she never failed him. To her his words were always music, his presence was always light. Half-dead and miserable as he was, she could know and love the aching heart of him that lived so furiously behind all the death and the misery and the ashes of young hopes that crusted him. She was like the sky and the trees. She was like the young grass springing and waving so delicately in the wind. She was like the water and the rolling hills. . . . He had discovered these things at Hampstead, whither he had gone out of sheer aimlessness. He had never been in the Tube, and one day, with a shilling borrowed from Harry, it seemed appropriate to him to plunge into the bowels of the earth. The oppression of the air, the roar of the train, the flash of the stations as he moved through them, suited his mood, fantastic and futile. He got out at Hampstead.

It was his first sight of the country. He could hardly move at first for emotion. He found himself laughing, and he stooped and touched the grass tenderly, almost timidly, as though he were afraid of hurting it. He was fearful at first of walking on it, but that seemed to him childish, and he strode along with his quick, light-footed stride and lost himself in the willow groves. He made a posy of wild-flowers and took them back to his mother, carrying them unashamedly in his hand, entirely oblivious of the smiles of the passers-by. He knew he could not tell his mother of the happiness of that day, and the flowers could say more than any words.

Yet the happiness only made his misery more acute. He suffered terribly from the pious narrowness of his home, the restricted, cramped life of his brothers and sisters, who seemed to him to be stealing such life as they had from the religious observances to which they were bound by their father's rigid will. Prayers at home, prayers in the synagogue: the dreadful monotony of the home, of the talk, of the squabbles: human life forced to be as dull as that of the God who no longer interfered in human life. . . . There was a tragedy in the street. There had been a scandal. A young Rabbi, a gloriously handsome creature, who sang in the synagogue, had fallen in love with a little girl of fourteen who lived opposite the Kühlers. Golda had watched the intrigue from her windows, and she said it was the girl's fault. The Rabbi used to go every day when her father was out and she used to let him in. Jacob wrote to the girl's father, and the Rabbi left his lodgings and took a room over a little restaurant round the corner. He had his dinner and went upstairs and sat up all night singing, in his lovely tenor voice, love songs and religious chants, so sweetly that the neighbours threw their windows open and there was a little crowd of people in the street listening. And in the morning they found him with his throat cut.

"It was the girl's fault," said Golda, but Jacob said: "A man should know better than to melt when a little girl practises her eyes on him."

This tragedy relaxed the nervous strain which had been set up in Mendel by his troubles. New forces stirred in him which often made him hectic and light-headed. Women changed their character for him. They were no longer soothing ministrants, but creatures charged with a mysterious, a maddening charm. He trembled at the rustle of their skirts and his eyes were held riveted by their movements. He was suffocated by his new curiosity about them.

Sometimes, in his despair over his painting and the apparently complete disappearance of his talent, he would fill in the day in his father's workshop, stretching rabbit-skins on a board. Girls and men worked together, busily, quietly, dexterously, for the most part in silence, for they were paid by the piece and were unwilling to waste time. There was a girl who had just been taken into the workshop to learn the trade. She was small and plump and swarthy, but her face was beautiful, the colour of rich old ivory. Her eyes were black and golden from a ruddy tinge in her eyelashes. Her lips were full and pouting, and she had long blue-black hair, which she was always tossing back over her shoulder. When Mendel was there she rarely took her eyes off him, and even when her head was bent he could feel that she was watching him.

He waited for her one evening, and with his knees almost knocking together he asked if she would come to his studio and let him draw her. With a silly giggle she said she would come, and she ran away before he could get out another word.

The next evening he waited in his studio for her, but she did not come. So again the next and the next, and it was a whole week before she knocked at the door.

He pulled her in. Neither could speak a word. At last he stammered out:

"I—I haven't got my drawing things ready."

"I don't mind," she said, and she gave a little shiver.

"Are you cold?" he asked, and he touched her neck.

She threw up her head, seemed to fall towards him, and their lips met.

Thrilling and sweet were the hours they spent, lost in the miracle of desire, finding themselves again, laughing happily, weeping happily, breaking through into the enchanted world, where the few words that either knew had lost their meaning. They were hardly conscious of each other. They knew nothing of each other, and wished to know nothing except the lovely mystery they shared. It was some time before he even knew her name, or where she lived, or what her people were. She existed for him only in the enchantment she brought into his life, in the release from his burden, in the marvellous free life of the body. Royal he felt, like a king, like a master, and she was a willing slave. From home she would steal good things to eat, and she would sit with shining eyes watching him eat; and then she would wait until he had need of her. . . . Strange, silent, happy hours they spent, free together in the dark little room, free as birds in their nest, happy in warm contact, utterly quiescent, utterly oblivious. . . .

Soon their silence became oppressive to them, but neither could break it, so far beyond their years and their childish minds was the experience in which they were joined. When the first ecstasy passed and they became conscious and deliberate in their delight, they had unhappy moments, to escape from which he began to draw her. Into this work poured a strong cool passion altogether new to him, a joy so magnificent that he would forget her altogether. He was tyrannical, and kept her so still that she would almost weep from fatigue and boredom. But he was not satisfied until he had drawn every line of her, and had translated her from the world of the body to the world of vision and the spirit. He knew nothing of that. He was only concerned to draw her as he had drawn the ginger-beer bottle at the Polytechnic. Certain parts of her body—her little budding breasts and her round arms—especially delighted him, and he drew them over and over again. Her head he drew twenty times, and he found a shop in the West End where he could sell every one. And each time he bought her a little present.

She was not satisfied with that. She wanted to display him to her friends. She wanted him to take her to music-halls and to join the parade of boys and girls. He refused. That would be profanation. He and she had nothing to do with the world. He and she were the world. Outside it was only his drawing. He could not see that she was unable to share it. Did he not draw her? Did he dream of drawing anything but her? . . . To go from that to restaurants, the lascivious pleasantries of the streets, the garish music-halls, was to him unthinkable.

She said he cared more for his drawing than for her, and indeed he would sometimes draw for a couple of hours and then kiss her almost absent-mindedly, just as she was going. He was so happy and satisfied and could not imagine her being anything less, or that she might wish to express in music-halls and "fun" what he expressed in his work.

He felt gloriously confident, and naïvely told his mother how happy he was. Everything had come back.

He could draw better than ever. He would be a great artist.

Once more he took to painting in the kitchen. The studio was dedicated to the girl, Sara, who came to him in spite of her disappointment. He had spoiled her for other boys.

He painted all day long in the kitchen, and his life became ordered and regular. He went for a walk in the morning, then worked all day long until the workpeople began to clatter downstairs, when he would pack up his paint-box and run up to the studio to wait for Sara to come tapping softly at his door.

Golda was overjoyed at his new happiness and the budding manhood in him, but she knew that this springtime of his youth could not be without a cause. She knew that he was in love and was fearful of consequences, and dreaded his being fatally entangled. She kept watch and saw Sara stealthily leave the house hours after the other workpeople had gone. She told Jacob, and Sara was dismissed and forbidden ever to come near the house again.

CHAPTER V

A TURNING-POINT

AT first Mendel hardly noticed the passing of Sara. He waited anxiously for her to come, but when she never appeared he went on working, only gradually to discover that the first glorious impulse had faded away. However, the habit of regular work was strong with him, and he could go on like a carpenter or a mason or any other good journeyman. But there was no one to buy what he produced, and his father began to talk gloomily and ominously of the workshop.

"Never!" said Mendel. "If I am not a great artist by the time I am twenty-three I will come and work. If I have done nothing by the time I am twenty-three I shall know that I am no good."

"I can see no reason," said Jacob, "why you should not work like any other man and paint in your spare time. Issy is a good dancer in his spare time, and Harry is good at the boxing. Why should you not paint in your spare time and work like an honest man?"

Mendel turned on his father and rent him.

"You do not know what work is. You work with your hands. Yes. But do you ever work till your head swims, and your eyes ache because they can see more inside than they can outside? If I cannot paint I shall die. I shall be like a bird that cannot sing, like a woman that has no child, like a man that has no strength. I tell you I shall die if I cannot paint."

"Yes, he will die," said Golda. "He will surely die."

"He will die of starvation if he goes on painting," replied Jacob.

"And if you had not been able to sleep you would have died of starvation for all that work ever did for you," cried Golda, convinced that Mendel was speaking the truth.

Shortly before this crisis Mendel had discovered a further aspect of the Christian world. A good young man from an Oxford settlement had heard of him and had sought him out. This young man's name was Edward Tufnell. He was the son of a rich Northern manufacturer, and he believed that the cultured classes owed something to the masses. He believed there must be mute, inglorious Miltons in the slums, and that they only needed fertilisation. When, therefore, he heard of the poor boy who sat in his mother's kitchen painting oranges and fish and onions, he was excited to bring the prodigy within reach of culture. He made him attend lectures on poetry and French classes. These duties gave Mendel a good excuse for escaping from home in the evenings, and he attended the classes, but hardly understood a word of what was said. He liked and admired Edward Tufnell, who was very nearly what he imagined a gentleman to be—generous and kind, and quick to appreciate the human quality of any fellow-creature, no matter what his outward aspect might be. Edward Tufnell treated Golda exactly as he would have treated an elderly duchess.

To Edward Tufnell, therefore, Mendel bore his difficulty, and Edward took infinite pains and at last, through his interest with the Bishop of Stepney, procured him a situation in a stained-glass factory, where he was set to trace cartoons of the Virgin Mary and S. John the Baptist and other figures of whom he had never heard. But, though he had never heard of them, yet he understood that they were figures worthy of respect, and it shocked him to hear the workmen say: "Billy, chuck us down another Mary," or "Jack, heave up that there J. C. . . ." He was acutely miserable. To draw without impulse or delight was torture to him, and he could not put pencil to paper without a thrill of eagerness and desire, which was immediately baffled when his pencil had to follow out the conventional lines of the stained-glass windows. And the draughtsmen with whom he worked were empty, foul-mouthed men, who seemed to strive to give the impression that they lived only for the mean pleasures of the flesh. They knew nothing, nothing at all, and he hated them.

He was paid five shillings a week, and was told that if he behaved himself, by the time he was twenty or twenty-one he would be making thirty shillings a week. Jacob was very pleased with this prospect, and told his unhappy son that he would soon settle down to it, and he even began to upbraid him for not painting in the evenings. Mendel could not touch his brushes. He tried hard to think of himself as an ordinary working boy, and he endeavoured to pursue the pleasures of his kind. He went with Harry to boxing matches and joined him in the raffish pleasures of the streets, which, however, left him weary and disgusted. He had known something truer and finer, and he could not help a little despising Harry, who pursued girls as game, and directly they were kindled and moved towards him he lost interest them, and, indeed, was rather horrified by them.

Strange in contrast was Mendel's relation with Edward Tufnell, who was entirely innocent and could see nothing in his protégé but a touching sensitiveness to beauty. The urchin with his complete and unoffended knowledge of the life of the gutter was hidden from him. Edward found, and was rejoiced to find, that the boy was sensitive to intellectual beauty and to ideas. He gave him poetry to read—Keats and the odes of Milton—and was very happy to explain to him the outlines of Christianity and the difference that the coming of Christ had made to the world. He did not aim at making a convert, but only at feeding the boy's appetite for tenderness and kindness and all fair things. Mendel was striving most loyally to be resigned to his horrible fate, and the teachings of Christ seemed to fortify his endeavour. When, therefore, he asked if he might read the New Testament, Edward lent it to him without misgiving. ✓

The result was disastrous. Mendel pored over the book and it seemed to let light into his darkness. He read of the conversion of S. Paul and his own illumination was apparently no less complete. The notion of holding out the other cheek appealed to him, for he felt that the whole world was his enemy. It had insulted him with five shillings a week, and if he were meek it would presently add another five. . . . And then what a prospect it opened up of a world where people loved each other and treated each other kindly and lived without the rasping anger and suspicion and jealousy that filled his home.

He went to the National Gallery and began to understand the Italians. He would become a Christian and paint Madonnas, mothers suckling their children, with kindly saints like Edward Tufnell looking on. Yet the new spirituality jarred with his life at home and was not strong enough to combat it. That life contained a quality as essential to him as air. It stank in his nostrils, but it was the food of his spirit and he could not, though his new enthusiasm bade him do it, sentimentalise his relation with his mother. Her relation with his father forbade it, and his father cast a shadow over the greater life illuminated by the figure of Christ. Yet because of the pictures he could not abandon the struggle, and he tried to find support by proselytising Harry. That roisterer had begun to find his life very unsatisfying, and he gulped down the new idea simply because it was new. He got drunk on it, refused to go to the synagogue, and performed a number of acts that he thought Christian, as wasting his money on useless and hideous presents for his mother and sisters. Also he took a delight in talking of the Messiah, and ascribed all the misfortunes of the family to its adherence to an exploded faith.

Jacob was furious. This soft Christian nonsense was revolting to him.

"Say another word," he shouted, "say another word and I turn you out of the house. Jeshua! I will tell you. In America it has been proved, absolutely proved in a court of law, that this Jeshua was nothing better than a pimp. It was proved by a very learned Rabbi before a Christian judge, and when the judge saw that it was proved he broke down and wept like a woman."

"I've only your word for it," said Harry, already rather dashed.

"I tell you I've seen it in print. If you like I will send for the book to America."

Harry held his peace. That settled it for him, and even Mendel was shaken by the storm his Christian inclinations had let loose.

"The Christians are liars," said Jacob. "Every one of them is a liar, and they eat filth."

There was a passion of belief in his father which Mendel could not but honour, and that other faith, so far as he knew, was held but mildly. It was charming in its results, but its spirit was unsatisfying to him who had been bred on stronger fare. All the same, his attitude towards his father's authority was changed. His simple acceptance was shaken, and he was in revolt against the repression of his dearest desires enjoined by it. His tongue was loosed and he began to talk enthusiastically to Edward Tufnell about his ambitions.

"I beat them all at the school," he used to say, "and I would never let anybody beat me. I can see more clearly than anybody. I can see colour where they can see none, and shadows where they can see none. And when I have painted them, then they can see them."

He was entirely unconscious in his egoism, and Edward was so generous a creature that he was not shocked or offended by it. He was a Quaker and as simple in his faith as a peasant, and he was young enough to know how difficult it was for the boy to expose his thoughts. After he had listened to his outpourings he would lead the boy on to talk of his experiences at the stained-glass factory. Mendel had a wonderful gift of vivid narration. Everything was so real to him, he had no reason to respect anything in the outside world unless it compelled the homage of his instinct, and in his broken Cockney English he could give the most dramatic descriptions of everything he saw and did. When he was engaged upon such tales, helping them out with wonderful mimicry, he had no shyness and laid bare his feelings as though they were also a part of the external scene.

Edward knew nothing at all about painting, but he could respond to quality in a human being, and he recognised that here was no ordinary boy. His first impulse was to rescue him from his surroundings, support him, send him to school. But what a Hell that would be for the sensitive foreigner brought face to face with the ruthless force of an ancient tradition! Edward himself had suffered enough from being such an oddity as a Quaker, but to send this Jew, who had learned nothing and had none but his natural manners, to a Public School would be an act of cruelty. Besides, the boy would not hear of being parted from his mother, whom he was never tired of praising. He told Edward quite solemnly that his mother had said things far more beautiful than anything in Keats or Milton and that no book could ever have held anything more moving than her descriptions of the life at home in Austria, with the Jews in their gaberdines with their long curls hanging by their ears, and the foolish peasants in their bright clothes, and the splendid officers who clapped children into prison if they splashed their great shining boots with mud. . . . As he listened Edward felt more and more convinced that it was his duty not to allow this rich nature to be swallowed up in the grey squalor of the slums. He had begun his philanthropic work believing that Oxford had much to give to the poor, and he had come in time to realise that the world of which Oxford was the romantic symbol stood sorely in need of much that the poor had to give. Mendel confirmed and strengthened an impression which had for some time been disturbing Edward's peace of mind. He felt that if he could help the boy he would be translating his perception into action.

He discussed the matter with his friends, who smiled at his solemnity. "Dear old Edward" was always a joke to them, so seriously did he take the problems with which he was faced. They said that, of course, if the boy was a genius he would find his way out and would be all the greater for the struggle. Edward protested that young talent was easily snuffed out, but again they laughed and said that if it were so then it was no great loss. Edward then said that the boy had a fine nature which might easily be crippled by evil circumstances. That they refused to believe either, and Edward made no progress until he told his tale to a rich young Jew who had lately come to the settlement. This young man, Maurice Birnbaum, was at once fired. His father was a member of a committee for aiding young Jews of talent. With Edward he swooped down on the Kühlers in his motor-car, and Golda showed him all her son's work, from the watch he drew at the age of three to a study of Sara's breasts. Birnbaum knew no Yiddish, and Golda scorned a Jew who could not speak the language of his race. He was also extremely gauche and talked to her rather in the manner of a parliamentary candidate canvassing for votes. He patronised her and told her that her son had talent, but that she must not expect Fortune to wait on him immediately. "A Christian Jew!" said Golda scornfully when he had gone. "He stinks of money and shell-fish. If you are going to eat pork, eat till the grease runs down your chin." And she had a sudden horror that Mendel might grow like that, all flesh and withered, uneasy spirit. She felt inclined to destroy all the pictures, and when Mendel came in she told him of her visitor and of her alarm, and he reassured her, saying: "What I am I will always be, for without you I am nothing. . . ." It was only from Mendel that Golda had such sayings. No one else ever acknowledged in words her quality or her power for sweetness in their lives, and she was terrified at the thought of his going. The big motor-car would come and take him and all his pictures away, she imagined, and he would be swept up into glittering circles of which alone he was worthy, though they were quite unworthy of him. And some rich woman would be enraptured with him, and she would take him to her arms and her bed, and he would be lost for ever. Mendel told her it meant nothing, that such people forgot those who were poor and never really helped them, because they could never know what it was like to need help: but he had a premonition that he had done with the stained-glass factory. He took up his brushes again and cleaned them, and chattered gaily of the things he would do when the motor-car fetched him and he was asked to paint the portraits of lords and millionaires.

Edward inquired further of Birnbaum, and he brought Mendel a paper to fill up, stating his age, circumstances, parentage, etc., etc. He was to send this, with a letter, to Sir Julius Fleischmann, who was a famous financier and connoisseur. Edward drafted a letter, but Mendel found it servile, and wrote as follows:—

Dear Sir,—

I send you my paper filled up. My father is a poor man and I wish to be a painter. I have won prizes at a school, but I cannot make my living by my art. I am not asking for charity. I am only asking that my work shall be judged. If it is good painting, then let me paint. Give me my opportunity, please. If it is bad painting, then it is no great matter, and I will go on until I can paint well, and then I will show you my work again. If money is given me I will pay every penny of it back when I am as successful as I shall be. I am sending three drawings and two paintings.

Yours faithfully,

Mendel Kühler.

This letter was sent enclosed in a parcel made up with trembling hands. He knew that the great moment had come, that at last he had attained the desired contact with the outside world. He was wildly elated, and had fantastic and absurd visions of Sir Julius himself driving down at once in his motor-car, knocking at the door and saying: "Does Mr. Mendel Kühler live here?" Then he would enter and embrace him and cry: "You are a great artist." And he would turn to Golda and say: "You are the mother of a great artist. You shall no longer live in poverty." And he would sit down and write a cheque for a hundred pounds. The story swelled and swelled like a balloon. It rose and soared aloft with Mendel clinging desperately to it. But every now and then it came swooping down to earth again, and then Mendel would imagine his drawings and pictures being sent back without a word. Elated or despondent, he passed through life in a dream, and was hardly conscious of his surroundings either at the factory or at home.

This went on for weeks, during which he composed letters of savage insult to Sir Julius, to Birnbaum, and even to Edward Tufnell, telling them that he needed no help, that he was a Jewish artist and would stay among the Jews, the real Jews, those who kept themselves to themselves and to the faith of their fathers, and had no truck with the light and frivolous world outside. But he tore all these letters up, for he knew that the answer he desired would come.

At last one morning there was a note for him. The secretary of the committee wrote asking him to take more specimens of his work to Mr. Edgar Froitzheim, the famous artist, at his studio in Hampstead. Mendel had never heard of Froitzheim, but it seemed to him an enormous step towards fame to be going to see a real artist in a real studio. He felt happier, too, at having this intermediary appointed, for he knew that artists always knew each other by instinct and helped each other for the sake of the work they loved.

Golda made him put on his best clothes, and washed him and brushed his hair. He packed up half a dozen drawings and his picture of the apples, which had been too precious to trust to the post or to Sir Julius, and he set out for Hampstead. To cool his excitement he walked across the Heath, remembering vividly the day when he had first seen it, and again it seemed to him a place of freedom and surpassing loveliness, the sweet, comfortable quality of the grass only accentuated by the bare patches of ground, which were here and there of an amazing colour, purple and brown. A rain-cloud came up on the gusty wind and shed its slanting shower, and its shadow fell on the rounding slopes. He became aware of the form of the Heath beneath its verdure and colour. Between himself and the scene he felt an intimacy, as though he had known it always and would always know it. It amused him and filled him with a pleasant glee, which, when it passed, left him shy for the encounter with the famous Froitzheim, the arbiter of his immediate fortunes.

CHAPTER VI

EDGAR FROITZHEIM AND OTHERS

VERY bright was the brass on Mr. Froitzheim's front door, very bright the face of the smiling maid who opened it. Mendel blushed and stammered inaudibly.

"Will you come in?" said the maid, "and I will ask Mr. Froitzheim."

She left Mendel in the hall and disappeared. This was a very large house, marvellously clean and light and airy. The wallpaper and the woodwork were white. On the stairs was a brilliant blue carpet. Through the window at the end of the passage were seen trees and a vast panorama of London—roofs, chimneys, steeples, domes—under a shifting pall of blue smoke.

The maid went into the studio and told Mr. Froitzheim that a boy was waiting for him—a boy who looked like an Italian. She thought he might be selling images, and he had a package under his arm. Mr. Froitzheim told her to bring the visitor in. He was arranging draperies, Persian and Indian coats, yellow and red and blue, and he did not look up when Mendel was shown in. He was a little dark Jew, neat and dapper in figure and very sprucely dressed, but so Oriental that he looked out of place in Western clothes. But that impression was soon lost in Mendel's awe of the studio. Here was a place where real pictures were painted. There were easels, a table full of paints, an etching plant, a model's throne, a lay figure, pictures on the walls, stacks of pictures behind the door, and the little man standing there, fingering the silks, was a real artist.

"Hullo, boy!" said Mr. Froitzheim.

"M-Mendel Kühler."

"Something to show me, eh?"

"Ye-yes. Pictures."

"What did you say your name was?"

"Kühler. Mendel Kühler."

"Oh yes. I remember. You know Maurice Birnbaum?"

"No."

"Eh? . . . What do you think of these? Lovely, eh? Bought them in India. You should go there. You don't know what sunlight is until you've been there—to the East. Ah, the East! Fills you with sunlight, opens your eyes to colour. . . . Persian prints! What do you think of these?"

He showed Mendel a whole series of exquisite things which moved him so profoundly that he forgot altogether why he had come and began to stammer out his rapture, a condition of delight to which Mr. Froitzheim was so unaccustomed that he stepped back and stared at his visitor. There was a glow in the boy's face which gave it a seraphic expression. Mr. Froitzheim tiptoed to the door and called, "Edith! Edith!" And his wife came rustling in. She was a thin little woman with a friendly smile and an air of being only too amiable for a world that needed sadly little of the kindness with which she was bursting. They stood by the door and talked in whispers, and Mendel was brought back to earth by hearing her say, "Poor child!" He knew she meant himself, and his inclination was to fly from the room, but they barred the door. She came undulating towards him, and she seemed to him terrifyingly beautiful, the most lovely lady he had ever seen. He thought Mr. Froitzheim must be a very wonderful artist to have such a studio, such a house, and such a woman to live with him.

Mrs. Froitzheim made him sit down and drew his attention to a bowl of flowers—tulips and daffodils. Mendel touched them with his fingers, lovingly caressed the fleshy petals of a tulip. Mrs. Froitzheim went over to her husband and whispered to him, who said:—

"Yes. Yes. It is true. He responds to beauty like a flower to the sun."

In the centre of the studio was a large picture nearly finished of three children and a rocking-horse, cleverly and realistically painted. Mendel looked at it enviously, with a sinking in the pit of his stomach, partly because he could not like it, and partly because he felt how impossible it would be for him to cover so vast a canvas.

"Like it?" said Mr. Froitzheim, wheeling it about to catch the best light.

"Yes," said Mendel, horrified at his own insincerity and unhappy at the vague notion possessing him that the picture was too large for him, whose notion of art was concentration upon an object until by some inexplicable process it had yielded up its beauty in paint. Composing and making pictures he could not understand.

"Well, well," said Mr. Froitzheim. "So you want to be an artist? Art, as Michael Angelo said, is a music and mystery that very few are privileged to understand. I have been asked by the committee to give my opinion, and I feel that it is a serious responsibility. It is no light thing to advise a young man to take up an artistic career."

"Yes, Edgar, that is very true," said his wife, with a wide reassuring smile at Mendel, whom she thought a very charming, very touching little figure, standing there drinking in the words as they fell from Edgar's lips.

Mr. Froitzheim produced a pair of spectacles and balanced them on his nose.

"It is a serious thing, not only for the sake of the young man but also for Art's sake. The sense of beauty is a dangerous possession. It is like a razor, safe enough when it is sharp, injurious when it is blunted. Your future, it seems, depends upon my word. I am to say whether I think your work promising enough to justify your being sent to a school. I asked you to bring more of your work to confirm the impression made by what I have already seen."

He spoke in an alert, sibilant voice so quickly that his words whirled through Mendel's mind and conveyed very little meaning. Only the words "a music and mystery" lingered and grew. They were such lovely words, and expressed for him something very living in his experience, something that lay, as he would have said, below his heart. He loosened the string of his untidy parcel and took out the picture of the apples. There were music and mystery in it, and he held it very lovingly as he offered it to Mrs. Froitzheim, much as she had just offered him the bowl of flowers.

"Very well painted indeed," said she, and Mendel winced. He turned to the artist as to an equal, expecting not so much praise as recognition. Mr. Froitzheim took the picture from him and went near the window. He became more solemn than ever.

"This is much better than the drawings. Have you always painted still-life?"

"I painted what there was at home."

"Have you studied the still-life in the galleries? Do you know Fantin-Latour's work?"

"No," said Mendel blankly.

"Of course, there is no doubt that you must go on."

Mendel had never had any doubt of it, and he began to feel more at his ease. That was settled then. There would be no more factory for him. He was to be an artist, a great artist. He knew that Mr. Froitzheim was more excited than he let himself appear. The apples could no more be denied than the sun outside or the flowers on the table. . . . He looked with more interest at Mr. Froitzheim's picture. It amused him, much as the drawings in the illustrated papers amused him, and he was pleased with the quality of the paint. He was still alarmed by the hugeness of it. His eyes could not focus it, nor could his mind grasp the conception.

Mrs. Froitzheim asked him to stay to tea and encouraged him to talk, and he told her in his vivid childish way about Golda and Issy and Harry and Leah and Lotte. She found him delightfully romantic and told him that he must not be afraid to come again, and that they would be only too glad to help him. Mr. Froitzheim said:—

"I will write to the committee. There is only one school in London, the Detmold. You should begin there next term, six weeks from now. Don't be afraid, work hard, and we will make an artist of you. In time to come we shall be proud of you. I will write to your mother, and one of these days I will give myself the pleasure of calling on her. . . . You must come and see me again, and I will take you to see pictures."

Mendel was in too much of a whirl to remember to say "Thank you." He had an enormous reverence for Mr. Froitzheim as a real artist, but as a man he instinctively distrusted him. It takes a Jew to catch a Jew, and Mendel scented in Mr. Froitzheim the Jew turned Englishman and prosperous gentleman. And in his childish confidence he was aware of uneasiness in his host, but of course Mr. Froitzheim could easily bear down that impression, though he could not obliterate it. He was an advanced artist and was just settling down after an audacious youth. He had been one of a band of pioneers who had defied the Royal Academy, and he had reached the awkward age in a pioneer's life when he is forced to realise that there are people younger than himself. He believed in his "movement," and wished it to continue on the lines laid down by himself and his friends. To achieve this he deemed it his business to be an influence among the young people and to see that they were properly shepherded into the Detmold, there to learn the gospel according to S. Ingres. He had suffered so much from being a Jew, had been tortured with doubts as to whether he were not a mere calculating fantastic, and here in this boy's work he had found a quality which took his mind back to his own early enthusiasm. That seemed so long ago that he was shocked and unhappy, and hid his feelings behind the solemnity which he had developed to overawe the easy, comfortable, and well-mannered Englishmen among whom he worked for the cause of art.

He was the first self-deceiver Mendel had met, and the encounter disturbed him greatly and depressed him not a little, so that he was rather overawed than elated by the prospect in front of him. He felt strangely flung back upon himself, and that this help given to him was not really help. He was still, as always, utterly alone with his obscure desperate purpose for sole companion. Nobody knew about that purpose, since he could never define it except in his work, and that to other people was simply something to be looked at with pleasure or indifference, as it happened. He used to try and explain it to his mother, and she used to nod her head and say: "Yes. Yes. I understand. That is God. He is behind everybody, though it is given to few to know it. It is given to you, and God has chosen you, as He chose Samuel. . . . Yes. Yes. God has chosen you." And he found it a relief sometimes to think that God had chosen him, though he was disturbed to find Golda much less moved by that idea than by the letter which Mr. Froitzheim wrote to her, in which he said that her son had a very rare talent, a very beautiful nature, and that a day would come when she would be proud of his fame.

Yet there were unhappy days of waiting. Jacob would not hear of his leaving the factory until everything was settled, and when Mendel told the foreman he was probably going to leave to be an artist, that worthy drew the most horrible picture of the artist's life as a mixture of debauchery and starvation, and told a story of a friend of his, a marvellous sculptor, who had come down to carving urns for graves—all through the drink and the models; much better, he said, to stick to a certain income and the saints.

At last Maurice Birnbaum came in his motor-car. Everything was settled. The fees at the Detmold would be paid as long as the reports were satisfactory, and Mendel would be allowed five shillings a week pocket-money, but he must be well-behaved and clean, and he must read good literature and learn to write good English. "I will see to that," said Maurice. "I am to take him now with some of his work to see Sir Julius. His fortune is made, Mrs. Kühler. Isn't it wonderful? He is a genius. He has the world at his feet. Everything is open to him. I have been to Oxford, Mrs. Kühler, but I shall never have anything like the opportunities that he will have. It is marvellous to think of his drawing like that in your kitchen." Maurice was really excited. His heart was as full of kindness as a honeycomb of honey, but he had no tact. His words fell on Golda and Mendel like hailstones. They nipped and stung and chilled. Golda looked at Mendel, he at her, and they stood ashamed. "We must hurry," said Maurice. "Sir Julius must not be kept waiting. He is a stickler for punctuality."

As a matter of fact, Maurice only knew Sir Julius officially. His family had never been admitted to the society in which Sir Julius was a power and a light. The entrance to the house of the millionaire was a far greater event to him than it was to Mendel.

The splendid motor-car rolled through the wonderful crowded streets, Maurice fussing and telling Mendel to take care his parcel did not scratch the paint, and swung up past the Polytechnic into the desolation of Portland Place. At a corner house they stopped. The double door was swung open by two powdered footmen, and by the inner door stood a bald, rubicund butler. Maurice gave his name, told Mendel to wait, and followed the butler up a magnificent marble staircase with an ormolu balustrade. Mendel was left standing with his parcel, while one of the footmen mounted guard over him. He stood there for a long time, still ashamed, bewildered, smelling money, money, money, until he reeled. It made him think of Mr. Kuit, who alone of his acquaintance could have been at his ease in such splendour.

He felt beggarly, but he was stiffened in his pride.

The butler appeared presently and conducted him upstairs to a vast apartment all crystal and cloth of gold. In the far corner sat a group of people, among whom, in his confusion, Mendel could only distinguish Maurice Birnbaum and a small, wrinkled, bald old man with a beard, whose eyes were quick and black, peering out from under the yellow skull, peering out and taking nothing in. For the purposes of taking in his nose seemed more than sufficient. It was like a beak, like an inverted scoop. And yet his features were not so very different from those of the old men at home whom Mendel reverenced. There was a strange dignity in them, yet not a trace of the fine quality of the old faces he loved that looked so sorrowfully out on the world, and through their eyes and through every line seemed to absorb from the world all its suffering, all its vileness, and to transmute it into strong human beauty. There were some women present, but they made no impression whatever on Mendel, who was entirely occupied with Sir Julius and with resisting the feeling of helplessness with which he was inspired in his presence. He heard Maurice Birnbaum talking about him, describing his life, his mother's kitchen, the street where he lived, and then he was told to exhibit his pictures. A footman appeared and put out a chair for him, and on this, one after another, he placed his drawings and pictures. Not a word was said. Even the apples were received in silence. Sir Julius gave a grunt and began to talk to one of the women. Maurice gave Mendel to understand that the interview was over, and the poor boy was conducted downstairs by the butler. He had not a penny in his pocket and had to walk all the way home with his parcel, which his arms were hardly long enough to hold.

CHAPTER VII

THE DETMOLD

FLUNG into the art school, he was like a leggy colt in a new field, very shy of it at first, of the trees in the hedges, of the shadows cast by the trees. This place was very different from the Polytechnic. There were fewer old ladies, and more boys of his own age. The teachers were Professors, and the pupils held them in awe and respect. There were real models in the life-class, male and female, and the students, male and female, worked together. No ginger-beer bottles here, where art was a practical business. The school existed for the purpose of teaching the craft of making pictures, and its law was that the basis of the mystery was drawing.

Mendel's first attitude towards the other students was that he was there to beat them all. He would swell with eagerness and enthusiasm, and tell himself that he had something that they all lacked. He would watch their movements, their heads bending over their work, their hands scratching away at the paper, and he could see that they had none of them the vigour that was in himself. And by way of showing how much stronger he was he would use his pencil almost as though it were a chisel and his paper a block of stone out of which he was to carve the likeness of the model. He was rudely taken down when the Professor stood and stared with his melancholy eyes at his production and said:—

"Is that the best you can do?"

"Yes."

"Why do it?"

This was a stock phrase of the Professor's, but Mendel did not know that, and he was ashamed and outraged when the class tittered.

"No," said the Professor. "I don't know what that is. It certainly isn't drawing." And with his pencil he made a lovely easy sketch of the model, alongside Mendel's black, forbidding scrawl. It was a masterly thing and it baffled him, and humiliated him because the Professor moved on to the next pupil without another word. Not another line could Mendel draw that day. He sat staring at the Professor's sketch and at his own drawing, which, while he had been doing it, had meant so much to him, and he still preferred his own. The Professor's drawing had no meaning for him. He could not understand it, except that it was accurate. That he could see, but then his own was accurate too, and true to what he had seen. The light gave the model a distorted shoulder, and he had laboured to render that distortion, which the Professor had either ignored or had corrected.

Mendel cut out the Professor's drawing and took it home and copied it over and over again, but still he could not understand it. He was in despair and told Golda he would never learn.

"I shall never learn to draw, and the Christian kops will all beat me," he said.

"But they sent you to the school because you can draw. Didn't Mr. Froitzheim say that you could draw!"

"The Professor looks at me with his gloomy face, like an undertaker asking for the body, and he says: 'I mean to say, that isn't drawing. It isn't impressionism. I don't know what it is.'"

"It can't be a very good school," said Golda.

"But it is. It is the only school. All the best painters have been there, and Mr. Froitzheim sent his own brother to it. The Professor says I shall never paint a picture if I don't learn to draw, and I can't do it, I can't do it!"

To console himself he painted hard every evening and regarded the Detmold entirely as a place to which his duty condemned him—a place where he had to learn this strange wizardry called drawing, which he did not understand. He went there every day and never spoke to a soul, because he realised that his speech was different from that of the others, and he would not open his mouth until he could speak without betraying himself. He listened carefully to their pronunciation and intonation, and practised to himself in bed and as he walked through the streets.

So woful were his attempts to emulate the Detmold style of drawing, that at last the Professor asked him if he was doing any work at home. To this Mendel replied eagerly that he was painting a portrait of his mother.

"Hum," said the Professor. "May I see it?"

So Mendel brought the picture, and the Professor said:—

"I mean to say, young man, that it wouldn't be a bad thing if you gave up work a little. I don't want to have to send in a bad report, but what can I do? There's something in you, plenty of grit and all that, but you're young, and, I mean to say, you're here to learn what we can teach you. When we've done with you, you can go your own way and be hanged to you. If you want to smudge about with paint and fake what you can't draw, there's the Academy."

At this awful suggestion Mendel shuddered. He was imbued enough with the Detmold tradition to regard the Academy as Limbo.

He gave up painting at home, and hurled himself desperately at the task of producing a drawing that should satisfy the Professor. Towards the end of his first term he succeeded, and had his reward in words of praise in front of the class.

The Professor had meanwhile taken one of the pupils aside and asked him not to leave the poor little devil so utterly alone. "After all," he said, "the school doesn't exist only for drawing. It has its social side as well, and I don't like to see any one cold-shouldered unless he deserves it. I mean to say, you other fellows have advantages which don't necessarily entitle you to mop up all the good things and leave none for your fellow-creatures."

Mitchell, the pupil, took his homily awkwardly enough, but promised that he would do what he could. He seized his opportunity one day when Mendel at lunch had horrified the company by picking up a chicken bone and tearing at it with his teeth. Mitchell took him aside and said:—

"I say, Kühler, old man, you'll excuse my mentioning it, you know, but it isn't done. I mean, we eat our food with forks."

Mendel knew what was meant, for at lunch he had been conscious of horrified eyes staring at him and had wished the floor would open and swallow him up. He muttered incoherent words of thanks and wanted to rush away, but Mitchell caught him by the arm and said:—

"I say, we artists must hang together. There aren't many of this crowd who will come to anything, and the

Pro thinks no end of you. Won't you come along and have tea with me and some of the other fellows?"

Mendel went with him, delighting in the young man's easy, condescending Public School manner and pleasant, crisp voice, in which he spoke with an exaggerated emphasis.

"Gawd!" he said. "It makes me sick to see all the fools and the women wasting their time there, scratching away, while those of us who have any talent and could learn anything are left to flounder along as best we may. Do you smoke?"

Mendel had never smoked, but he did not like to refuse. He took a cigarette, which very soon made him feel sick and giddy. He lurched along with Mitchell until they came to a tea-shop, where they found two other young men whose faces were familiar.

"I've brought Kühler," said Mitchell. "He's a genius. This is Weldon, who is also a genius, and Kessler, who can't paint for nuts, and I'm a blame fool, though it's not my fault. My father's a great man. Gawd! what can you do when your own father takes the shine out of you at every turn?"

They began to talk of pictures and of one Calthrop, who was apparently the greatest painter the world had ever seen and a product of the Detmold.

"Sells everything he puts his name to," said Kessler.

"What a man!" said Weldon. "Goes his own way, absolutely believing in his art. If they like it, well and good. If they don't like it, let 'em lump it. He's as often drunk as not, and as for women . . . !"

Weldon and Kessler deserted pictures for women. Mitchell grew more and more glum, while Mendel was still feeling the effects of the cigarette too strongly to be able to take in a word.

"Gawd!" said Mitchell. "There they go, talking away, absolutely incapable of keeping anything clear of women. I can't stand it."

He dragged Mendel away, leaving his friends to pay the bill; and, as they walked, he explained that he was in love, and could not stand all that bawdy rubbish, and he elaborated a theory that an artist needed to be in love to keep himself alive to the sanctity of the human body, familiarity with which was apt to breed contempt or an excessive curiosity. Mendel said that he also had been in love, and he gave a vivid account of his raptures with Sara.

"My God!" cried Mitchell; "you don't mean to say that she came to you—a girl like that?"

"Yes," said Mendel; "I was never so happy."

"But, I say, weren't you afraid?"

"She was very beautiful."

Mitchell pondered this for a long time. He seemed to be profoundly shaken. At last he said:—

"But with a girl you *loved?*"

"I loved her when she was there."

"But when she wasn't there?"

"I was busy painting."

"I say, you are a corker! If it were Weldon or Kessler I should say you were lying."

"I do not lie," replied Mendel with some heat. "It may have been wrong, but it was good, and I was happier after it. I think I should have gone mad without it, for everything had disappeared—everything—everything; and without painting you do not understand how terrible and empty life is to me. I have nothing, you see. I am poor, and my father and mother will always be poor. Their life is hard and beastly, but they do not complain, and I should not complain if I did not have this other thing that I must do."

"Well, I'm jolly glad to know you," said Mitchell. "I'm not much of a fellow, but I'd like you to know my people. My father's a great man. He'll stir you up. And you must come along with me and Weldon and Kessler and see life while you're young. Good-bye."

He shook hands vigorously with Mendel and strode off with his long, raking stride, while Mendel stood glowing with the happiness of having found a friend, some one to whom he could talk almost as he talked to Golda: a fine young Englishman, pink and oozing robustious health, ease, refinement, and comfort. He thought with a devoted tenderness of Mitchell's rather absurd round face, with its tip-tilted nose and blinking eyes, its little rosebud of a mouth and plump round chin, on which there was hardly a trace of a beard. . . . "My friend!" thought Mendel, "my friend!" And he gave a leap of joy. It meant for him the end of his loneliness. No longer was he to be the poor, isolated Yiddisher, but he was to move and have his being with these fine young men who were the leading spirits of the school, the guardians of the tradition bequeathed to it by the great Calthrop. . . . Oh! he would learn their way of drawing, he would do it better than any of them. He would be gay with them and wild and merry and young. And all the while secretly he would be working and working, following up that inner purpose until one day he appeared with a picture so wonderful that the Professor would say, like Mr. Sivwright, that he had nothing more to learn. And because of his wonderful work, everybody would forget that he was a Jew, and he would move freely and easily in that wonderful England which he had begun to perceive behind the fresh young men like Mitchell and the cool, pretty girls at the school. That England was their inheritance and they seemed hardly aware of it. He would win it by work and by dint of the power that was in him.

Of the girls at the school he was afraid. He blushed and trembled when any one of them spoke to him, and he never noticed them enough to distinguish one from another, so that they existed only as a vague nuisance and a menace to his happiness. Before Mitchell he was prostrate. He bewildered and confounded that young man with his outpourings, both by word of mouth and by letter. He had absolutely no reserve, and poured out his thoughts and feelings, his experiences, and Mitchell at last took up a protective attitude towards him and defended him from the detestation which he aroused in the majority of his fellow-students. At the same time Mitchell often felt that of the two he was the greater child, and he would look back upon the years he had spent at school in a rueful and puzzled state of mind, half realising that he had been shoved aside while the stream of life went on, and that now he had to fight his way back into it. While Mendel had been wrestling and struggling, he had been put away in cotton-wool, every difficulty that had cropped up had been met, every deep desire had found its outlet in convention. And now that he had set out to be an artist, here was this Jew with years of hard work behind him, and such a familiarity with his medium that he could do more or less as he liked without being held up by shyness or awkwardness. And it was the same in life. Mendel was abashed by nothing, was ashamed of nothing. Life had many faces. He was prepared to regard them all, and to fit his conduct to every one of them. He was critical, not because he wished to reject anything, but because he must know the nature of everything before he accepted it. He hated and loved simply and passionately, and if he felt no emotion he never disguised the fact. Whereas Mitchell and the others were so eager to feel the emotions which their upbringing had denied that they leaped before they looked and fabricated what they did not feel. Mendel learned from them that life could be pleasant, and they became aware that there were regions of life beyond the fringes of pleasantness. They softened him and he hardened them. They were always together, Mendel, Mitchell, Weldon and Kessler, working steadily enough, but out of working hours kicking up their heels and stampeding through the pleasures of London. . . . Calthrop was the divinity they served. He was a man of genius and had made the Detmold famous. Those, therefore, who came after him at the school must support him in everything. That was Mitchell's contention, who was by now in full swing of revolt against his Public School training, and in his adoration Mendel followed him, and the others were dragged in their train. Calthrop dressed extravagantly: so did the four. Calthrop smashed furniture: so did the four. And as Calthrop drank, embraced women, and sometimes painted outrageously, the four did all these things.

To Mendel it was Life—something new, rich, splendid, and thrilling. He had lived so long cramped over his work that it was almost agony to him to move in this swift stream of incessant excitement. There was no spirit of revolt in him. He could shed some of the outward forms of his religion, as to Golda's great distress he did, but against its spirit he could not rebel. That he carried with him everywhere: the bare stubborn faith in man, ground down by life and living in sorrow all his days. Happy he was not, nor did he expect to be so.

He might be happy one day, but he would be miserable the next. Life in him was not greatly concerned with either, but only to have both happiness and misery in full measure. His deepest feelings arose out of his work, the first condition of his existence; they arose out of it and sank back into it again. His work was the visible and tangible form of his being, which he hated and loved as it approached or receded from the terrible power that was both beautiful and ugly, and yet something transcending either. . . . And away there in London was the Christian world of shows. What he was seeking lay beyond that, and not in the dark Jewishness of his home. There lay the spirit, but the outward and visible form was to be sought yonder, where the lights flared and the women smiled at themselves in mirrors. He hurled himself into the shows of the Christian world in a blind desire to break through them, but always he was flung back, bruised, aching, and weary.

Day after day he would spend listlessly at home or at the school until seven o'clock came and it was time to go to the Paris Café, to sit among the painters and listen to violent talk, talk, talk—abuse of successful men, derision of the great masters, mysterious and awful whispers of what men were doing in Paris, terrible denunciations of dealers, critics, and the public.

The café was a kind of temple and had its ritual. It was the aim of the painters to "put some life into dear old London." Calthrop had given a lead. He had determined that London should be awakened to art, as the writing folk of a past generation had aroused the swollen metropolis to literature and poetry. London should be made aware of its painters as Paris was aware of the Quartier Latin. Bohemia should no longer be the territory of actresses, horsecopers, and betting touts. The

Paris Café therefore became the shrine of Calthrop's personality, and thither every night repaired the artists and their parasites, who saw in the place an avenue to liberty and fame. In the glitter and the excitement, the brilliance, the colour, the women with their painted faces, the white marble-topped tables, the mirrors along the walls, the blue wreathing tobacco-smoke, Calthrop's personality was magnified and concentrated as in a theatre. The café without him was Denmark without the Prince, and Mendel found the hours before he came or the evenings when he did not come almost insupportable. Yet it was not the man's success or his fame or his notoriety that fascinated the boy, whose instinct went straight to the immense vitality which was the cause of all. Calthrop was a huge man, dark and glowering. To Mendel he was like a figure out of the Bible—like King of Saul, in his black moods and the inarticulate fury that possessed him sometimes; and when he picked up and hurled a glass at some artist whose face or whose work had offended him, he was very like King Saul hurling the javelin.

There was always a thrill when he entered the café. The buzz would die down. Where would he sit and whom would he speak to? . . . It was one of the greatest moments in Mendel's life when one evening Calthrop came sweeping in with his cloak flung round his shoulders and sat opposite him and his three companions and raised a finger and beckoned.

"He wants you," said Mitchell, pushing Mendel forward.

"Come here, boy," growled Calthrop, stabbing with his pipe-stem in the direction of the seat by his side. "Come here and bring your friends. Bought a drawing of yours this morning. Damn good."

Mitchell, Kessler, and Weldon came and sat at the table, all too overawed to speak.

"What's your drink, heh?"

Drinks were ordered.

"Rotten trade, art," said Calthrop. "Dangerous trade. Drink, women, flattery. Don't drink. Marry, settle down, and your wife'll hate you because you're always about the place. . . . God! I wish I could be a Catholic. I'd be a monk. . . . My boy, don't get into the habit of doing drawings. They won't look at your pictures if you do, and we want pictures—my God, we do! Everybody paints pictures as though they were for a competition. You've got life to draw from—real, stinking life. That's why I have hopes of you."

Mendel was so fluttered and flattered that he could only gulp down his drink and blink round the café, feeling that all eyes were upon him; and indeed he was attracting such attention as had never before been bestowed on him. A girl at the next table ogled him and smiled. She was with a young man whom the four detested and despised. This young man reached over to take a bowl of sugar from their table. To take anything from the great man's table without so much as "By your leave" was sacrilege and was very properly resented. There was a scuffle, the sugar was scattered on the floor, glasses fell crashing down, Mitchell and Weldon hurled themselves on the young man, and the manager came bustling up, crying: "If-a-you-pleess-a-gentlemen." But there was no breaking the mêlée. A waiter was sent out for the police, and three constables came filing in. One of them seized Mitchell, and Mendel, half mad with drink and excitement, seeing his beloved friend, as he thought, being taken off to prison, leaped on the policeman's back and brought him down. In the confusion Calthrop and the others slipped away and Mendel was arrested, still fighting like a wild cat, and led off to the police-station, the constable whispering kindly in his ear: "Steady, my boy, steady. A youngster like you should keep clear of the drink."

The inspector smiled at the extreme youthfulness of the offender, but decided that a taste of the cells would do no harm and that the boy had better be sober before he was sent home. So Mendel had four hours on a hard bench until a constable came in and asked him if he wanted bail. He said "Yes," and, when asked for a name, gave Calthrop's, who presently arrived and saw him liberated, after being told to appear in court next morning at ten o'clock.

When he reached home he found his mother waiting up for him with wet cloths in case his head should be bad.

"What now? What now?" she asked.

"I've been in prison."

"Prison!" Golda flung up her hands and sat down heavily. For her all was lost. It was true then, that, outside in the world, at the other end of it, was always prison, for the just and for the unjust, for the old and for the young, for the innocent and for the guilty.

He tried to make light of it. For him, too, it was a serious matter. He saw himself figuring in the Sunday papers: "Famous Artist in the Police Court," with his portrait in profile as on a medallion. Birnbaum and Sir Julius would read it. He would be taken away from the Detmold and Edward Tufnell would never speak to him again. He astonished, embarrassed, and delighted Golda by flinging himself in her arms and sobbing out his grief.

CHAPTER VIII

HETTY FINCH

GOLDA was passing through a very difficult time. Rosa was hotter on the pursuit of Issy than ever. Harry had had a violent quarrel consequent on his reiterated demand for proof of the judicial destruction of Christianity in America, and at last, like his father, he went out and bought a clean collar and announced his departure for Paris. He went away and not a word had been heard from him. Lotte refused to look at any of the young men brought by the match-makers, and Leah was the only comfortable member of the family, and she made no attempt to conceal her unhapiness with Moscowitsch. She would come on Saturday evenings and go up to her mother's room and fling herself on the bed and cry her heart out, until late in the evening Moscowitsch came to fetch her, when she would go meekly and apparently happily enough. . . . And on the top of all these troubles, here was Mendel going to the devil at a gallop.

Leah's trouble with Moscowitsch was that he would never let her go out without him, and he could very rarely be persuaded to go out at all. As for going away in the summer, he could see no sense in it. He gave his wife a fine house. What more did she want? She had her children to look after. What greater pleasure could she desire? His life was entirely filled with his business and his home, and he would not look beyond them. The neighbours went to the seaside? The neighbours were fools who lived for ostentation and display. They did not know when they were well off. . . . Moscowitsch had a great admiration for his father-in-law as a man who knew what life was and refused to dilute its savour with folly, and he regarded Golda as a perfect type of woman, one who left the management of life to her husband and allowed herself to be absorbed in her duties as a wife and mother.

But Leah longed to go to the seaside. It became an obsession with her, and, because she could never talk of it, she thought of nothing else. She was sick with envy when she saw the neighbours going off with the children carrying buckets and spades. Secretly she bought her own children buckets and spades, though they were much too small to use them.

At last, when her worries began to tell on Golda, Leah declared that what she needed was sea air, and offered to take her for a fortnight to Margate, and Golda, anxious to escape from the horror of Mendel's coming home night after night drawn and white with dissipation, and from the dread of an explosion from Jacob, consented, and asked if Issy might go, as that Rosa of his was making him quite ill.

For Golda, Leah knew that Moscowitsch would do anything in the world, and so she procured his consent on condition that he was not expected to accompany them, for he hated the sea, which had made him very ill when he came to England, and he never wished to set eyes on it again.

Leah already had the address of some lodgings recommended to her by a neighbour. She engaged them, and on a fine July day went down to Margate by the express with her children, Golda, and Issy.

The lodgings were let by a handsome, florid woman with masses of bleached golden hair, a ruddled complexion, fat hands covered with cheap rings, plump wrists rattling with bracelets, and a full bosom on which brooches gleamed. Leah thought her a very fine woman, and was so fascinated by her that she stayed indoors day after day, helping with the housework and gossiping, so that she never once saw the sea, except from the train as she was leaving. Mrs. Finch was a lady, by birth, but she had been unfortunate. She had an uncle in the Army and a cousin in the War Office, and she had lived in London, in the best part of the town, where, in her best days, she had had her flat. Also she had travelled and had been to Paris and Vienna. But she had been unfortunate in her friends. Leah commiserated her, and, open-mouthed, gulped down all her tales of the gentlemen she had known, while Golda, eager for more information of the glittering world which had swallowed up her Mendel, listened too, fascinated and shuddering. And Leah, to show that she also was a person of some consequence, began to talk of her wonderful brother. She told of the motor-car which had come and whirled him away, of his visit to the millionaire's house, of the fine friends he was making, of the men and women he knew whose names were in the papers.

"Every day," she said, "he is out to tea, and every evening he is out at theatres and music-halls and parties and flats and hotels, and his friends are so rich that they pour money into his pockets. He just makes a few lines on a piece of paper and they give him twenty pounds, or he makes up some paint to look like a face or a pineapple and his pockets are full of money."

"Yes," said Golda uneasily. "He will be very rich."

"Then next time you come to Margate," said Mrs. Finch, "it will be the Cliftonville, and you'll despise my poor lodgings."

"Oh no," cried Leah, "for it is like staying with a friend."

Every day Leah added something to the legend of Mendel, Mrs. Finch urging her on with romances of her own splendid days. But the most eager listener was Hetty, the girl who did the rough work of the house and was never properly dressed until the evening, because, from the moment when she woke up in the morning until after supper, she was kept running hither and thither at Mrs. Finch's commands. She was sufficiently like Mrs. Finch to justify Golda in her supposition that she was that fine woman's daughter, but nothing was ever said in the matter. Hetty did not have her meals with them, and, indeed, there was no evidence that she had any meals. In the evenings she was allowed to go out, and she would come back at half-past ten or so with her big eyes shining and a flush fading from her cheeks and leaving them whiter than ever. Very big were her eyes, very big and pathetic, and her face was a perfect oval. She had rather full lips, always moist and red. During the whole fortnight she never spoke a word except to Issy. Indeed, she avoided Golda and Leah, and she alarmed Issy by what he took to be her forwardness, when she asked him to take her to the theatre. He complied with her request, but he was much too frightened of her to speak, and he could think of nothing to say except to offer to buy her chocolates and cigarettes, which she accepted as though it was the natural thing for him to give her presents. She talked to him about Mendel, and wanted to know if it was true that he knew lords and had real gentlemen to tea with him in his studio.

"There's more goes on in his studio than I could tell you," said Issy with a dry, uncomfortable laugh. "Artists, you know!"

"Oh yes! Artists!" said Hetty with a dreamy, wistful look in her eyes as she drew in her lower lip with a a slight sucking noise. "I wish I lived in London, I do. Ma used to live in London, but she's too old now to find any one to take her back there. It's dull here. Does your brother ever come to Margate?"

"No," said Issy. "He'd go to Brighton if he went anywhere. I've got another brother who's gone to Paris."

"O-oh! Paris! Is he rich too?"

"No."

Issy shut up like an oyster. He could feel the girl probing into him, and he was sorry he had brought her. She was spoiling his fun, the adventures he had promised himself during his holiday from Rosa's indefatigable attentions. Hetty was too dangerous. He knew that if she got hold of him she would not let go.

He took her home and never spoke another word to her during the remainder of his visit, and he said to his mother once:—

"That's an awful girl."

"Worse than Rosa?" asked Golda.

"Rosa would stay. That girl would be off like a cat on the tiles."

Golda retorted with a description of Rosa of the same kind, but of a more offensive degree.

Declaring that they were better for the sea air, and warmly enjoining Mrs. Finch to visit them if ever she should come to London, the party left Margate with shells and toffee and painted china for their friends and relations, conspicuous among their luggage being the buckets and spades which had never been used.

As Issy and his mother reached their front-door, he saw Rosa at the corner of the street, and bolted after her, leaving Golda to enter the house and give an account of her doings. Mendel, for once in a way, was at home. He was at work on a picture for a prize competition at the Detmold, as also were Mitchell and Weldon, so that they were living quietly for the time being. Golda gave a glowing description of the beauties of Margate and of Mrs. Finch and her jewellery. She began to talk of Hetty, but for some reason unknown to herself, with a glance at Mendel she stopped, and went off into a vague, dreamy rhapsody concerning Margate streets.

"The streets are so clean, so nice, and the air is so strong, and the sky is so clear, with the clouds tumbling across it, little clouds like cotton-wool and grey clouds like blankets, almost as it was in Austria, and I was so happy my heart was full of flowers, almost as it was in Austria."

"What's the good of talking of Austria?" growled Jacob. "There you had a corner. Here you have a whole house."

"But I was happy there."

Issy came in on that and announced that he was going to be married to Rosa. There was half a house vacant in the next street, and he proposed to take it.

"You shall not," said Jacob. "I will not have that slut in the house. What sort of children will she give you? Squat-browed and bow-legged they will be. How will she look after them? A woman that cannot contain her love for her man will have none for the children. She is a dirty girl, I tell you, and so is her mother and her father's mother, and her father's father's mother."

"I don't know who we are, to hold up our heads so high. You are my father, but in some things I cannot obey you. The business is mine . . ."

"It is not. It is mine!" said Jacob. "It is in your name, but it is mine. It is in your name, but your name is my name, and you shall not give it to a woman like that, who goes smelling about street corners like a dog. Her father has no money, and he never goes to the synagogue."

"I am not marrying her father. I shall go out of the business, then, and I shall start for myself. Rosa will kill herself if I do not marry her, and I must do it."

"It is true," said Golda quietly. "I think she will kill herself."

Jacob stormed on and Issy blustered, until at last he confessed that Rosa had caught him, and that he had to marry her. Jacob threw up his hands and in a shrill voice of icy contempt told Issy exactly what he thought of such marriages; they were nothing but dirt. . . . "Because you have a little dirt on you, must you roll in the mud? You are like dirty dogs, all of you. You, and Harry, and Mendel. I don't know what has come to you in this London. God gave me one woman, and I have asked for nothing else."

"You would not let me marry Rosa when I was young."

Words and feeling ran so high that Mendel, aghast, fled away to his studio, where the sound of the storm reached him. It raged for hours, and ended in Issy flinging himself out of the house and slamming the door.

A week later Rosa was brought to see Golda, and she fawned on her like a dog that has been whipped, sat gazing at her with her stupid brown eyes, and whimpered: "I should have killed myself. Yes, I should have killed myself."

"You would not have been so wicked," said Golda. "It is sinful to throw good fish after bad. Can you cook?"

"Yes," said Rosa. "I can make cucumber soup. I could do anything for Issy, he is so strong and handsome."

And Golda said to Mendel after the interview: "A woman like that is like a steam bath for a man."

A few days later Issy and Rosa were married, without ceremony, without carriages, or photographs, or guests, or feast. It was a wedding to be ashamed of, but Jacob would not, and Rosa's father could not, lay out a penny on it. The couple took half the house in the next street, and Issy discovered at once that he hated his wife, and was at no pains to conceal it either from her or from his family.

Mendel was profoundly depressed by this disturbance and plunged downwards, for he still half expected his family to rise with him. He was to make all their fortunes, but, with the rest of the family, he detested the unhappy Rosa and regarded her as little short of a criminal. He was depressed, too, because the summer holidays were approaching and he would be bereft of his beloved Mitchell, who was going away for three months to the country. He would be left with his family, in whom there was no peace. Why could they not be like the Mitchells and the Weldons, who could live together without quarrels, and could take a happy, humorous interest in each other's doings without these devastating passions and cursings and denunciations? And yet when he thought of the Mitchells and the Weldons and the

Froitzheims, in their charming, comfortable houses, there was something soft and foolish about them all—sometimes savouring of idolatry, for instance, in the homage Mitchell paid his father, in the assumption that Mrs. Mitchell was a very remarkable woman, whose children could not be expected to be ordinary. More and more did Mendel value his mother, who was content to be just a woman and to live without flattery of any kind, and to accept every one whom she met and to value them as human beings, without regard to their rank, station, possessions, or achievements. Himself she esteemed no more because he was an artist, though he had tried hard to make her give her tribute to that side of his nature. She loved him simply, neither more for his attainments nor less for his doings, that pained her deeply. And that direct human contact he obtained nowhere else, and in no one else could he find it existing so openly and frankly. Yet he loved the follies and pretences of the outside world. He adored theatricality, and among his polite friends there was always some drama towards. It was never drowned in incoherent passions, and he himself, among the nice cultured folk, was always a startling dramatic figure. Sometimes they seemed to him all slyness and insincerity, and then he loathed them; but that was generally when he had aimed at and failed in some dramatic coup, or when they had encouraged him to talk about himself until he bored them. On the whole, he was successful with them, as he wished to be, easily and without calculation. It was when they made calculation necessary, by feigning an interest that they did not feel, that he was shocked and angry. If anywhere the atmosphere was such that he could not be frank, then he avoided that place and those people.

Now he was bored, bored to think of the hot stew-ing months with no relief except such as he could find in vagrom adventures from the harsh rigidity of life among his own people. And he was in a strange condition of physical lassitude. Even his ambition was stagnant. In his work he had only the pleasure of dexterity. It had no meaning, and contained no delight. When he painted apples or a dead bird or a woman, the result was just apples or a dead bird or a woman. The paint made no difference and the subject was still better than his rendering of it. He was only concerned with technical problems. Fascinated by a gradated sky in a picture in the National Gallery, he practised gradated skies until he could have done them in his sleep.

And he was tired, tired in body and in soul. Both in his life and in his work he had had to conquer a convention in order to keep his footing in the world of his desire. Just as he had only learned the Detmold style of drawing by a supreme effort of will, so also by a tremendous effort he had learned the rudiments of manners and polite conversation. He had had to overcome his tendency to fall violently in love with every charming person, male or female, he met, and to regard with an aversion equally violent those in whom he found no charm. Such charm must for him be genuine and not a matter of tricks, and for this reason he had regarded every person whom he thought of as old with dislike. For him anybody above twenty-five was "old." He still thought he would be made or marred by the time he was twenty-three, but that age seemed immeasurably far off. Long before then, like a thunderbolt, his full genius would descend upon him and all the world would know his name. He was almost innocent of conceit in this. Such, he believed, was the history of genius, and so far nothing had happened to deny his inward consciousness of his rarity. Relieve the pressure of circumstance and he soared upwards. . . . There was a queer, uncomfortable pleasure in such thoughts and dreams and in imagining a fatality that should drag him down and down to Issy's level and lower. There was a sickening fascination in picturing to himself a descent as swift and irresistible as his upward flight. Yet dreary were the hours of waiting for the impetus that had once or twice so freely and so strongly moved in him. Sick with waiting, he would work in a fury to master trick after trick and difficulty after difficulty in painting, so as to be ready when the time came. All the cunning and wariness of his race welled up in him as he prepared deliberately, slowly, patiently for his opportunity.

One afternoon, as Golda was sleeping in her kitchen, she was awakened by a knock at the door. Going to open it, she found Hetty Finch waiting there, neatly clad in a brown tailor-made coat and skirt, very smart, with a trim little feathered hat on her head. Golda's thoughts flew to Mendel, and her first inclination was to slam the door in Hetty's face, but, remembering that the boy was out, she admitted her.

Hetty followed Golda into the kitchen and stood looking round it with obvious disappointment. She had not imagined the Kühlers to be so poor.

"I promised Ma I would call," she said, taking the chair which Golda dusted for her.

"And how is your Ma?" asked Golda.

"She's given up the house and gone into a hotel as manageress," replied Hetty, lying as usual, for her mother had been sold up and had taken a place as barmaid in a tavern. "And I've come to London to earn my living. Ma gave me fourteen shillings, and that was all she could do for me. Still, I'm off her hands now."

Golda asked her what she was going to do, and she said she thought of going into service until she had had a look round. Where was she living? She had taken a room with some friends, lodgers of Ma's, off Stepney Green.

Conversation was lifeless and desultory until Issy came into the room, when she brightened up, but he was overcome with his old terror of the girl and soon hurried away. Then she noticed the pictures on the wall and asked if they were Mendel's. Golda refused flatly to talk about them, but Hetty persisted and would talk of nothing else. Jacob came in and she made him talk about Mendel, and she made herself so charming to him and flattered his simple vanity so grossly that presently Golda was staggered by the sight of him making tea with his own hands and pouring it out for the visitor.

"Yes," said Jacob, "the boy did all those before he was fourteen. He will get on, that boy. He is bound to get on, but I shall not live to see him in his glory."

"I think they're lovely," said Hetty, sipping her tea. And she went on chattering vivaciously until Jacob was called away to the workshop, when once again conversation became lifeless and desultory. Golda made one excuse after another to try to get rid of her, but Hetty would not budge. At last there came the sound of Mendel's key in the door. Golda bustled out of the room and whispered to him:—

"You must not come in. I have visitors and there are letters waiting for you upstairs."

But Mendel had seen a girl sitting in the kitchen and he wanted to know whether she was pretty or not. She turned and he saw that she was charmingly pretty. He brushed by his mother. He felt at once that he had made a good impression, and, indeed, all Hetty's dreams and fancies were more than realised, though she was a little affronted and disappointed by the poorness of his clothes.

"It is Hetty Finch," said Golda, "from Margate."

Mendel had had Issy's account of Hetty and he was on his guard at once.

"Yes. I've come to live in London," said she.

"I've never lived out of it," he answered.

"I thought perhaps, as you know so many people, you could help me to find some work. There must be room somewhere in London for poor little me."

"I'll see about it," said Mendel, taking note of her features and figure, and rather upset to find himself so little excited by her. Issy had given him to imagine a dashing, overwhelming woman. He only felt vaguely sorry for Hetty and a desire to stroke her, though he knew her at once for what she was, and how she was drinking in the strongly developed male in him. For the first time he felt cool and detached in the presence of a woman: a deliciously grown-up sensation, and he wanted more of it.

She soon said she must go, and in Golda's hearing he promised to write to her, but when he took her to the door he asked her to come to his studio, and she said she would come the next day.

CHAPTER IX

THE QUINTETTE

HE had more of the deliciously grown-up sensation the next day, when Hetty came to see him. She was something new. The girls of the streets he knew, and unattainably above them were the girls at the school and his friends' sisters, whom he called "top-knots," because of the way they did their hair. The "top-knots" were hardly female at all to him, so remote were they, so entirely unapproachable; utterly different from the girls of the streets, who were so accessible that he had but to hold out his arms to find one of them, as if by magic, in his grasp. And now Hetty was different again.

"You are cosy up here," she said, moving at once to the only comfortable chair and curling up in it. "Your sister told me about you."

"Leah? What lies did she tell you?"

"Well, I knew it wasn't *all* true, about the money you were making, because you wouldn't live here if it was true, would you? But I suppose some of your friends make a lot of money."

"They're rich, some of them," replied Mendel, aghast to find himself thinking coldly of his friends in terms of money, his mind rushing swiftly between the two poles of his father and Sir Julius. "Yes. There's plenty of money in London."

"That's what Ma said when she gave me the fourteen shillings. She said a girl with eyes like mine had no need to go short in London." Hetty raised her eyes and looked full at him, who met her stare boldly and yet with some alarm, finding himself acting a part.

Hetty was flattering him by regarding him as the possessor of a key to the wealth of London, and in spite of himself he could not help accepting the rôle. She had touched an element of his character of which till then he had been unconscious. The knave in him sprang into being and thrust all his other qualities aside. He began to boast of his success and to swagger about the luxury and immorality of London life, though it was not all braggadocio, but also a kindly desire to make Hetty happy by talking to her of the things that interested her.

He told her about Calthrop and the Paris Café, and Maurice Birnbaum and his motor-car and richly furnished flat in Westminster, and a Lord's son who was at the Detmold, and Mitchell, whose father was a great man. And all the time, as he talked, he was astonished at the sound of his own voice, so different did it sound.

Hetty wriggled with pleasure in her chair and pouted up her lips. Presently she said her hat made her head ache, and she took it off and stretched out her arms and said:—

"No more pots and pans for me! I do think you're lovely. It's just like a story. I call that real fun. Not like Margate. . . . Do you think I could get work as a model, or do you have to be slap-up?"

Mendel thought of the drabs who posed and he could not help smiling.

"I could only tell by your figure, though your face is all right."

"Do you think I'm pretty?" she asked.

"Very."

"I'll show you my figure, if you like."

"All right, I'll light the gas-stove in the bedroom. It's a little cold in here."

He showed her into the bedroom, and when she was ready she called to him.

She was beautifully made, but she looked so foolish with her anxiety to please him that he could take hardly any interest in her, and he was distressed, too, because the only background he could give her consisted of his new knavish thoughts of the wealth of London. Yet nothing could disturb it, for the background was suitable. Her white body was her offering.

"How much would I be paid?"

"A shilling an hour."

"Do you pay that?"

"Yes."

"If you could get me work I would sit to you for nothing."

"I'd pay you," he said. His generous qualities strove hard to reassert themselves, but there was something about this girl that compelled just what he was giving her—hardness for hardness, value for value. Yet she was certainly beautiful, and it was strange to him to be unable to give her the warm homage that within himself he could not help feeling.

She sat on the bed, making no move to cover herself, and said:—

"Artists *are* different. There was an artist once at Margate. It was him put the idea into my head. But he was very poor and not a gentleman."

And now to Mendel she was an object of sheer astonishment. He stood and warmed his legs by the gas stove and gaped at her, sitting on his bed and chattering in her clear, hard voice of her ambitions, her dreams, the drudgery at home, while in everything she said was a flattery which he could not resist. Worst of all, he felt that he was one of a pair with her. His talent, her body, were shining offerings with which they both emerged from the depths of the despised. Entering into her spirit, he too was filled with a desire for revenge. Yet in him this desire was charged with passion, which made their present situation ridiculous. He thought of the poverty and the obscure suffering downstairs, the dragging penury to which, but for his talent, he would have been condemned. Then he imagined her as Issy had described her at Margate, lurking in the kitchen, listening behind the door as Leah spun her yarns. He could sympathise with her, and she seemed to him almost gallant.

He got out a piece of mill-board and began to draw her, but to his annoyance could not get interested in what he was doing. He wanted to know more about her, could not rest content that a human being should be so reduced to a cold purpose. Yet, though she talked freely enough, nothing fell from her lips to meet his desire. She had no people, no class, no tradition, but still she was a person. He could not dismiss her as he dismissed so many, as "nonsensical."

"I can't make much of you now," he said, almost wailing. "I believe I'm tired."

And suddenly he hurled away his drawing and rushed at her and kissed her. She clung to him and he yielded to her will, seeing clearly that this was her purpose, this her desire, this her ambition, her all.

He knew that she was using him, was making certain of being able to use him. The newly discovered knave in him insisted on having his existence, and through it he enjoyed a certain defiant happiness.

Happiness! To be happy! That had seemed impossible. His first year at the Detmold had been miserable. He had been discouraged and almost listless. Often he would go to his mother and say: "I shall never be an artist."

"Not all at once," Golda would say. "Take a boy who is apprenticed to a bootmaker. He cannot all at once make good boots. He must spoil a deal of leather first. Or a tailor-boy: he must spoil cloth. A trade must be learned, and you can learn this, for you work hard enough at it."

For a moment or two he would see through her clear eyes and that was enough to set him working again, half believing that he would soon master his craft. But there had been the struggle to master what at the Detmold, with such unquestionable authority, they called "drawing."

This now, with Hetty, was in its way happiness, though he detested it and her. It was an escape. It was easy. It made no demands on him, save the small effort to achieve self-forgetfulness, and in that she aided him, for she seemed superior to himself and enviable in the clearness of her purpose. She offered herself and made no demands upon him except of what could cost him nothing: just a few words to his friends, a start in her chosen profession.

All the same, he was horrified at himself. Every other crisis and sudden change in his life had been attended with violent suffering, an eruption within himself, profound depression, almost a collapse. This had been as easy as walking through a door, a slipping from one part of his being to another. . . . Here suddenly was happiness, a queer detached, almost indifferent condition, full of pleasure, and he rejoiced in the novelty of it. He watched Hetty draw on her clothes again and was sickened by the sensual languor of her movements. She was drowsy, like a cat before a fire.

"No, I certainly shan't draw you to-day."

"What about to-morrow?"

"I shall be painting to-morrow."

"I do think you're a devil sometimes."

"I'll take you to the Paris Café, if you like."

"Will you?"

She perked up on that. She had not expected so soon to gain her desire.

"Yes. If you've got to earn your living you should meet people, and the sooner you get going the better."

Hetty sat with her chin in her hands, crouched in elation. Everything had turned out as she had hoped and planned, as she had willed that it should, and she regarded him with some contempt because he had been so easy and because he was so young. She was the same age as he, but she thought him a little vain boy. Yet when he looked at her she was afraid of him, for he knew so much and guessed so much more. To defend herself, her instinct drove through to his vanity and flattered it to blind him. She feigned an animation she was incapable of feeling to make herself more beautiful in his eyes, and he thought of his friends, Mitchell and Weldon, and how they would be stirred with her. He thought how she would please Calthrop, and he was lured into believing that he would gain in importance through her.

"You've come at a very bad time," he said. "They'll all be going away for the summer."

"Oh!" she looked dashed, hating to be caught out in a mistake. "Do they go away for long?"

"Three months."

"Oh, well!" she drawled. "I can get a place if nothing turns up. But something always does turn up. I'm one of the lucky ones, you know."

"I don't believe in luck," said he, with a sudden irruption of the old self that seemed to have been left so far behind.

"I must go now," she said.

They groped their way down the dark stairs, and he went out with her, feeling that he could not face his family, from whom he knew now that his face was turned. In the street a mood of freedom and adventure came over him, and for this mood she was a fitting mate. He took her on the top of a bus to the West End, among the promenading crowds, and she drank it all in with a kind of exaltation, her big eyes glowing, her body trembling with excitement. Into one café after another he led her, completely absorbed as he was in her purpose, and at last, when they mounted the eastward bus, she leaned her head on his shoulder, and he could hear her murmuring to herself: "London . . . London . . . London."

He too was thrilled as he had never been before by London. He had never so strongly realised it before. The great city had thrilled him with its beauty and had stirred him with its business, but never before had its spirit crept into his blood to send it whirling and singing through his veins. He hardly slept at all that night, and the next morning it was a long time before he could begin to work, which then seemed far removed from the effort and almost anguish it used to cost him. The still-life with which he had been wrestling became quite easy to do, and very soothing was the handling of brushes and paint. Every touch was like a caress upon his aching soul.

So began a period of real happiness. The pieces he painted with such soothing ease were generally admired and readily bought. The dealer to whom he took them was also a colourman and gave him apparently unlimited credit; and he laid in an immense stock of colours and amused himself with experiments. It seemed that his career was to be successful without a struggle. His patrons were delighted to find him so soon making money, and the Birnbaums and the Fleischmanns invited him down into the country, but as he found that they put him up in a servant's bedroom or a gardener's cottage he refused to go more than once, or to any more of their kind who were not prepared to forget his poverty.

He would rather stay in London with Hetty, whom he had begun to regard as a mascot. With her coming everything had changed. She had made everything easy and happy and delightful. He had no love for her, but he could not help feeling grateful. She had turned work into a pleasure, pleasure into a riot of ecstasy.

Alone with her in the evenings or with some chance acquaintance, during the holidays he roamed through London, basking in the summer evenings, discovering unimagined splendours, the Parks, the river, the Zoo, boating on the Serpentine, the promenade on the romantic Spaniard's Road at Hampstead. Nearly every night he wrote to Mitchell in the country, describing his new easy happiness in his work and his discovery of the charm of nights in London. And once a week

Mitchell would write to him and give him a delightful account of English country life in a valley, shut in by rolling hills between which wandered a slow, pleasant stream. Here Mitchell was painting, boating, playing tennis, making love.

"There's a Detmold girl lives near here with her people—Greta Morrison. You may remember her—glorious chestnut hair, big blue eyes, but as shy as a little mouse. I couldn't get a word out of her until I began to talk about you, and there's no end to her appetite for that. I don't mince matters. I tell her exactly what you are, exactly what you come from, and what a wild beast you are. She has seen you throw things about at the Detmold, and she seems absolutely to like it. Yet she is not a fool, and I like her enormously. She makes me feel what a rotter I am, but I can't get on with her unless I talk about you. I *have* heard that her work is good, but she won't show me a thing."

Mendel was pleased that a "top-knot" should be interested in him, but beyond the flicker of delight he gave no thought to the idea of Greta Morrison. The "top-knots" belonged to the world which he was going to despoil with Hetty Finch. That world must disgorge. It had condemned, and still condemned, his father and mother to bitter poverty, and he remembered how on their first coming to London the whole family had slept in one room, and how he had sat up in the middle of the night and looked at the recumbent bodies and suffered under the indignity of it. And his brothers had grown from ruddy, bronzed boys into pale-faced, worn young men. And behind Hetty was the dirty lodging-house and her Ma, of whom he had a very clear idea. He used to wax violent, and his imagination would run riot with the fantastic visions of success he conjured up.

Who were the "top-knots" that they should have an easy, pleasant time in the country while he was left to stew in London?

Hetty began genuinely to admire him, and her flattery was no longer empty. There was some sustenance in it.

"O—oh!" she used to say. "You'll get on. There's no doubt about that. You'll have a big stoodio and the nobs will come up in their motor-cars, and you'll be able to paint what you like then."

"You're a liar," he would reply. "I shall always paint what I like. I never do anything else, and never will. Once paint for the fools and you have to do it always, because you become a fool yourself."

Golda once met Hetty coming down the stairs. She told her she was a dirty slut and was not to show her face inside the house again. A few days later she saw her open the front door and slip out. In her anger she informed Jacob of the danger to Mendel, and Jacob went up to the studio.

"I will not have that harlot in my house," he said.

"She is not a harlot," replied Mendel rather shakily, for, though his father's power had dwindled, yet he was still a figure of authority.

"She is a harlot and a daughter of a harlot, and I will not have her in my house."

"She is a model, and I must have models, as I have tried to explain to you again and again. I am allowed money for models. I must have models, just as you must have skins."

"Then there are other models. I know this girl, what she is after, and she will ruin you."

"Neither she nor any one else in the whole world could ruin me," said Mendel, "for I am an artist, and while I have my art I ask nothing outside it."

"Don't argue with me!" shouted Jacob. "I will not have that drab in my house."

Mendel had a great respect and regard for his father. He was silent, and Jacob went downstairs, satisfied that he had asserted himself.

He said to Golda:—

"They will blow the boy's head off his shoulders with the fuss they make of him. I know how to take him down a peg or two."

"Don't go too far," said Golda. "It would be a black day for me if he went away and was ashamed of us."

"If I saw that he was ashamed of you," replied Jacob, "I would thrash him within an inch of his life. Ashamed of you, among all the dirt and trumped-up people he goes among!"

However, Hetty still came to the studio and there were frequent explosions, until at last Mendel, intent on the new independence he had won, declared that he could bear it no longer, and he arranged with Issy to take the top floor of his house and to turn that into a studio. This compromise was successful, and pleased both parties: Golda was happy to be relieved from further friction and Mendel was glad to be away, for he knew that his doings must hurt her, and that he hated. Yet he could see no way out of it. He was done for ever with the old simplicity of his untutored painting in her kitchen. Art was no longer a pure and hardly-won joy. It was a trade, like any other, and, like any other, it had its sordid aspect, and, to compensate for that, it was a career and could also be a triumph. These things he did not expect his mother to understand. He had Mitchell to talk to now, Mitchell to whom to impart the burden upon his soul, and Mitchell and he were to work together and to give to the world such art as it had never seen since the primitives.

Mitchell and he! That friendship was the source of his new confidence. Golda had been and still was much to him, but when it came to painting she knew nothing at all, and painting was the important thing. Through painting lay not only satisfied ambitions and fame and riches, but life itself, and of that what could Golda know?

It was a great thing, therefore, to be established away from home when Mitchell returned from the country. And Mitchell approved. He had suffered from being under his father's shadow, and with Weldon and Kessler he had taken a studio near Fitzroy Square. He said:—

"A time will come when you will have to leave the East End."

"I shall never leave them," replied Mendel. "What I want to paint is there. They are my people, and all that I have belongs to them."

"Rubbish. You'll soon be getting commissions, and you can't ask people who can afford to pay for portraits to a hole like that."

"They will come to my studio," said Mendel, "or I will not take their commissions."

Though Mitchell was rather shocked by his frank conceit, he could not but admire and envy the way his impulses came rushing to the surface and were never deterred by considerations as to the impression he might be making. Mendel trusted Mitchell absolutely and hid nothing from him, neither the most scabrous of his deeds nor the most childish of his desires. He made no secret of the new manly feeling that had come to him through Hetty, the conviction that he could meet the West End on its own terms.

When he showed Mitchell the work he had done during the holidays, his friend said:—

"Gawd! The difference is absolutely startling. There's charm in every one of them, and they're not fakes either."

With Hetty he was enraptured.

"Gawd!" he said; "I'll give ten years to painting her, as Leonardo did to Monna Lisa, and then it would not be finished. Came from a Margate lodging-house, did she? Mark my words: she'll marry a successful artist and queen it among the best."

With Mitchell, Hetty put forth all her cajolery when she found that he knew what she thought good people. She could look very pathetic and delicate, and middle-aged artists were sorry for her, and thought being a model a perilous profession for her. One of them warned her of the dangers she must run, and especially mentioned Mitchell and Kühler as young men to be avoided. They roared with laughter when she told them.

The Paris Café was Paradise to her, and she made friends with all its habitués and attracted the attention of Calthrop, who became Mendel's enemy for life when she told him that the youngster had said of him that he had been a good artist once, but was now only repeating himself.

Mith marvellous rapidity she picked up the jargon of the place, and could quite easily have taken her career in her own hands, but she would not surrender Mendel, who could no more do without her than he could without Mitchell. She clung to him and kept him a happy slave to his three friends, to whom she devoted herself as though her existence depended on the solidarity of the group. From morning to night she was with one or other of them, and every evening with the four of them at the Paris, or making a row at a music-hall and getting themselves kicked out.

She was learning her trade as they were learning theirs, and she was delighted with the ease with which Mendel picked up what she called "sense"; that is to say, he became much more like the others, affected their speech, grew his hair long, wore corduroys, a black shirt, and a red sash, and talked blatantly and with a slight contempt of great painters. But even so, he was disturbing, for he did all these things with passion, so that they tinged his soul, and were not as a mere garment upon it. Even in falsehood he was sincere.

When Hetty found Calthrop painting a self-portrait, she set her four boys painting self-portraits, and when she found the older men talking about the beauty of roofs and chimneys, the four were soon ecstatic about roofs and chimneys, and painting them without knowing how it had come about. She could feel what was in the air, and had no difficulty in making them conform to it, so that they were successful even while they were students, and were talked of and discussed and approached by dealers as though they were persons of consequence. Their life was one long intoxication: money, praise, wine, and debauchery went to their heads, and of all these excitants Mendel had the largest share, and found himself the equal even of Kessler, whose father was a millionaire soap-boiler. He attained an extraordinary skill at doing what was expected of him, and developed an instinct as sharp as Hetty's for the success of the moment after next.

He won scholarships at the Detmold and, carefully adapting his style, an open prize at the Royal Academy. His patrons were excited and delighted. He was interviewed by the Yiddish papers and photographed, palette and brushes in hand, in a dashing attitude. He said many foolish things to the reporters, but the printed version made him blush. He was represented as saying that art had been reborn during the last ten years, that the Royal Academy was exploded and would soon close its doors, that there was no art criticism in England, that there had never been a great Jewish artist, and that this deficiency in the most vital and enduring race in the world would now be repaired.

He thanked his stars that his friends could not read Yiddish. Two well-known Jewish painters wrote to the paper to say that they existed and to trounce his "bumptious and ignorant dismissal of respected and respectable art." And he heartily agreed with them. He was shaken out of the hectic dreams of months, yet could not feel or see clearly. His way was with Mitchell, and Mitchell was generously rejoicing in it all as though it had happened to himself, while Hetty was going from studio to studio spreading the news and declaring the arrival of a genius.

He wanted to go and hide his face in his mother's skirts, but she was so happy and elated with the congratulations of the neighbours and visits from the Rabbis of the synagogue that he could not but keep up his part before her. For her and for all his family he bought extravagant presents, and he went out and sought Artie Beech, whom he had not seen for years, and gave him a box of cigars. He had a melancholy idea that he was doing them all an injury and that he must somehow repair it. The exact nature of the injury he did not know, but his instinct was very sure that the whole business was false. Yet it was so actual that he could not help believing in it. He was hypnotised into accepting it. There seemed no reason why it should not go on for ever. Here, apparently, was what he had always striven for—art and homage—and the idea that they could go on for ever was terrible and paralysing. But there was not a soul in the world with whom he could share his feeling. If he showed the least hesitation they would accuse him of ingratitude.

He was filled with a smouldering rage against them all which found no vent until Maurice Birnbaum came in his motor-car and asked him to bring some of his things to show Sir William Hunslet, R.A., who had been much impressed with his prize picture. Once again Mendel climbed into the motor-car, and once again he was told not to let his parcel scratch the paint.

"Now," said Maurice, "you have the world at your feet, and I feel proud to have had my share in bringing it about. You can have everything you want, and if you don't grow into something really big it won't be our fault. Everything that money can do it shall do."

The car rolled through the streets which had been the scene of Mendel's happy rambles, but being carried through them in such magnificence made him feel helpless, a victim to something stronger than his own will and that he had always detested. He was being taken away from his mother and from Mitchell, and he knew whither motor-cars were driven. All roads ended in Sir Julius, who could sit and look at pictures without a word. Everything went spinning past him. This was going too fast, too fast, and he would be exhausted before he had really known his purpose. Maurice Birnbaum's exciting, patronising tones, chattering on exasperatingly, infuriated him, until he felt like stabbing him in his already dropping stomach. What could a fat man like that have to do with art? How could so fat a man drive down to the wretched poverty in Whitechapel and not feel ashamed?

But in spite of himself and his confused emotions Mendel enjoyed the drive, which showed him more of London than the narrowed area he frequented: more to conquer, more to know; shops, strange ugly buildings, polite, mincing people, women like dolls, men like marionettes, wide streets and plane-trees, the gardens and squares of the polite Southwest. Often there were Georgian houses like that in which his family lived, but so neat and trim and newly painted that they looked like doll's-houses, proper places for the dolls and the marionettes. . . . And it was exhilarating to be in the heart of the roaring traffic, bearing down upon scarlet buses, and swift darting taxi-cabs and motor-cars as rich as Maurice Birnbaum's. Out of the traffic they turned suddenly into a quiet street of dead houses and vast gloomy piles of flats. Outside a house more gloomy than the rest they stopped. Maurice got out fussily, told Mendel to be careful how he lifted his parcel out, fussed his way into the house through a dark, luxuriously furnished hall, and into a vast studio where there was a group of fashionably dressed women taking tea with Sir William and exclaiming about the beauties of a portrait that stood on the easel.

Maurice stood awkwardly outside the circle and muttered apologies, while Mendel felt utterly and crushingly foreign to the atmosphere of the place. He knew how these people would regard him. They would stare at him with a cold interest not unmingled with horror, and he would be conscious of bearing the marks of the place he came from, of smelling of the gutter. Against that separation even art was powerless. And what had his work to do with this huge, hard, brilliant portrait on the easel? If they admired that they would never look at his dark little pictures.

Sir William introduced Maurice to the ladies, but did not so much as look at the boy, whom his mind had at once ticked off as a "student," and therefore to be kept in his place. Maurice explained spluttering: words like "scholarship," "prize," "genius," "instinct," fell in a shower from his lips, and one of the ladies put up her lorgnette and stared at Mendel as though he were a picture or a wax model.

At last he was told to untie his parcel, and one by one he showed his pictures. Sir William blew out his chest and his cheeks, and with a wave of his hand blurted out one word:—

"Italy."

"That's what I say," said Maurice.

Mendel scented danger. They seemed to him to be conspiring together.

"Italy!" ejaculated Sir William. "Italy! Blue skies, the sun, the light. Give him light and landscape with form in it."

"Am I ill?" thought Mendel with some alarm, for Sir William sounded to him more like a doctor than a painter. And he decided that the Academician was not a real artist because he showed no sign of the fellow-feeling which had been so strong in Mr. Froitzheim.

Before the ladies he could say nothing. He put his pictures back in the parcel and heard Maurice and Sir William still conspiring together to send him to Italy. He was tired of being swung from one idea to another. At the Polytechnic they had told him that the essential thing in a picture was "tone," that he must remember the existence of the atmosphere between himself and the object he was painting, and that there were no bright colours in nature. At the Detmold little was said about "tone," but he was told that the essence of a picture was drawing, "the expression of form." . . . What next? He had a foreboding that Italy was only another name for another essence of a picture. Besides, he wanted to live. Though he adored art, yet it did not contain all that was precious to him—liberty and gaiety, friendship and affection. Always until the Detmold his life had been weighed down with poverty and with terrible obsessions like that of his dread of the fat, curly-headed boy who, during the six long years of his schooling, had waited for him outside the school-gates every day to give him a coward's blow and to challenge him to fight and to jeer at him if he refused. There had been furious, passionate loves to set him reeling, gusts of inexplicable desires and ambitions which had often made him weep with pain. And now, just as the world was opening out before him and he was warm with the friendship of an Englishman (for he was proud of Mitchell's Public School training), they wished to take him away and send him to a far country.

He had had enough of being a foreigner in England, and he loathed the idea of travel. His father had told him that England was the best country in the world, and, if he had suffered so much there, what would it be in others? Italy? He wanted to paint what he had always painted, fish and onions in a London kitchen. How could Italy help him to do that?

He would not go. He would refuse to go. These Birnbaums and Fleischmanns had had their way with him for long enough.

So lost was he in this growing revolt that he was already some distance away from Sir William's studio before he was aware of having left it.

"Our greatest painter," said Maurice. "The greatest since Whistler."

"Yes," said Mendel, aghast at the supersession of Calthrop and the idols of the Detmold. If Maurice could be so ignorant there was nothing to be said and argument was vain.

"He really appreciated your work," Maurice added.

"He never looked at it!" cried Mendel, enraged. "I put them in front of him one by one, but he always looked at the fat lady in blue."

"He could tell with one glance," protested Maurice, who had been mightily impressed.

Mendel saw that it was useless to talk, and shut his lips tight while Maurice chattered to him of his extraordinary good fortune in being able to go to Italy, to live among the orange groves and with the greatest galleries of the world to roam in, the most beautiful scenery and the most delightful food.

The mention of food made Mendel think of his mother's unsavoury dishes and sluttish table, the most distasteful feature of his existence, but he preferred even that to the Italy of Maurice Birnbaum and Sir William. Through such people, he knew, lay nothing that he could ever desire.

As soon as he reached home he told his mother that they wanted to send him abroad to study. He strode about the kitchen and waved his arms, growling:—

"Study? Study? I want to be an artist, not a student. I *am* an artist. I know art students when I see them —the Academy, South Kensington, the Detmold—they are all the same. Let them go abroad and never come back. No one will miss them, not even their fathers and mothers, if they have anything so natural. I will not go—I will not go!"

"But if the Maurice Birnbaum thinks you must go, then you must," said Golda. "It is their money that has been spent on you."

"They've spent enough," cried Mendel, "without that. I don't want their money any more. They know that. They want to keep me in their hands and to say that they made me. They? People like that! God made me, and they want to keep me all my life saying how grateful I am to them. Grateful? I am not."

"But you could go for a little while."

"I will not go at all."

He sat down and wrote to Maurice Birnbaum saying that he would not go to Italy, that he did not want any more of his commissions, and that he would not be interfered with any more. He would shortly repay every penny he had had, and he asked only to be allowed to know best what he wanted to do.

"Everything that I love is here in London, and I can only learn from what I love. I am one kind of artist and you want to turn me into another kind. You will only waste your money, and I will not let you do it."

Maurice never answered this letter and his patronage and that of his friends was withdrawn.

Mendel plunged more ardently than ever into his career with Mitchell and the others, but found that they were not prepared to share or to admit the new freedom which he had begun to enjoy. The Birnbaum patronage had always to a certain extent restrained him, but now that it was shaken off he plunged madly and wildly into every kind of extravagance. He was no longer content to be the equal of the others. He wanted to lead them.

He was the most successful of them all, and he wanted them all to join him in forcing art upon London. Calthrop had shown them the way, but he had unaccountably stopped short. He had many imitators, and there were even women who looked like his type, but it all ended in his personality. . . . Art was something else: something outside that, an impersonal thing, which London should be made to recognise. The pictures of Kühler, Mitchell, Weldon, and Kessler should be, as it were, only forerunners of the mighty pictures that should be painted. . . .

He was just as extreme and violent in his vices as he was in his idealism, and even Mitchell was rather upset by his pranks and caprices. It was one thing to take a shy tame genius among your acquaintance, quite another when the genius ran wild and dragged you hither and thither and with breathless haste from the vilest human company to the most dizzily soaring ideas. Weldon, who was uncommonly shrewd, had begun to see the danger of allowing Hetty Finch to arrange their affairs, and when on top of that Mendel, drunk with freedom and success, began to take charge, he thought it time to secure himself and began to withdraw from their undertakings and adventures.

At last Kessler struck, and told Mendel that he might be the greatest genius that was ever born, but should sometimes try to remember that his friends were gentlemen and could not always be making allowances for his birth and upbringing. This happened in the Paris Café. Mendel fell like a shot bird, like a stone. The eager words froze on his lips, his face visibly contracted and became haggard, his eyes blinked for a moment, then stared glassily. He sat so for some minutes, then rose from the table and walked quickly out of the café.

He did not appear for a week, nor was anything heard of him. He sat at home working furiously. Hetty Finch went to see him, but he turned her out, telling her that she was a hateful, cold-hearted woman and that he would never see her again.

At last he wrote to Mitchell, a letter of agony, for Mitchell, his friend, seemed to him the worst offender, by not having warned him of what was in the air:—

"You are my friend," he wrote, "my only friend. It is no more to you what I am, where or how I was born, than it is to me what you are. The soul of a man chooses his friend, and I trusted you even in my folly. You could have defended me and our friendship. You have not done so and I must live miserably without you. Good-bye. I shall not attempt again to enter a life in which my work is not sufficient recommendation. I was happy. I was not happy before. I am not happy now. I have been foolish, but I was your friend."

Mitchell was irritated by this letter, but he was also moved. He valued Mendel's sincerity, which had continually jolted him out of his natural indolence. And, as he had a fine talent and a fairly strong desire to use it to the full, the friendship had profited him. It had also helped him to come to reasonable terms with that great man, his father.

On the other hand he was in this difficulty, that he too had been slipping out of the quintette through his new friendship with Miss Greta Morrison and her friend, Miss Edith Clowes. Knowing Mendel's contempt for the "top-knots," he had said nothing of this matter, and had found it sometimes difficult to account for the afternoons and evenings given to the dilemma of discovering whether Miss Morrison or Miss Clowes were the love of his life. Mendel was an exacting friend, and, as he concealed nothing, expected no concealment.

Mitchell, like the true Englishman he was, deplored the unpleasant complication, but left it to time, impulse, or inspiration to unravel. Impulse, in due course, came to his aid and he invented a plan. First of all he wrote a manly note to Mendel, confessing his inability to understand why he should suffer for Kessler's caddishness, and declaring that friendship could not be so lightly broken. He received no reply to this, and proceeded by taking Morrison and Clowes (as in the fashion of the Detmold they were called) to see the docks at Rotherhithe. While there he gazed from Morrison to Clowes and from Clowes to Morrison, unable to decide which he loved, for both gave him an equal contraction of the heart, and then he told them that ships had never been properly painted, never *expressed* in form and colour; and then he added that it was clearly a man's job, and then he informed them that only a short distance away lived Mendel Kühler.

"Would you like to go and see him?" he asked. "It is the queerest thing to go and see him. A filthy street, a dark house, a ramshackle staircase, and there you are —absolutely one of the finest painters the Detmold has ever turned out."

"Do let us go and see him!" said Clowes, who had decided in her own mind that she was the third of the party and in the way. Morrison said nothing, and looked very solemn, as though she regarded the visit as an event—something to be half dreaded. She had a very charming air of diffidence, as though she were very happy and knew this to be an unusual and peculiar condition. Often she smiled to herself, and then seemed to shake the smile away, feeling perhaps that she, a slip of a girl, had no right to be amused by a world so vast and so varied.

She had enjoyed herself. The ships had stirred her romantically, and she could not at all agree with Mitchell about painting them, for were they not works of art in themselves? They moved her in the same way, arresting her eyes and delighting them, and touching her emotions so that they began to creep and tickle their way through her whole being. . . . O wonderful world to contain so much delight! And it pleased her that the ships should start out of the squalor of the docks like lilies out of a dark pond.

She smiled and shook the smile away when Mitchell spoke of Mendel Kühler. She remembered once meeting Mendel on the stairs at the Detmold. She had often noticed him—strange-looking, white-faced, romantic, with a look of suffering in his eyes that marked him out from all the other young men. . . . After she had passed him on the stairs she turned to look at him, and at the same moment he turned and she trembled and blushed, and her eyes shone as she hurried on her way.

Mitchell had told her a great deal about him, and she had heard other people say that he was detestable, an ill-mannered egoist. She supposed he was so, for she rarely questioned what other people said, but he remained a clear figure for her, the romantic-looking young man who had looked back on the stairs.

"We'll take him by surprise," said Mitchell, with a sudden qualm lest they should break in upon Mendel and Hetty Finch together. "If we told him he would hide all his work away and put on a white shirt and have flowers on the table, for he is terrified of ladies. He says they don't look like women to him."

"I'm sure," said Clowes, "I don't want to look like a woman to any man."

This was the most encouraging remark Mitchell had had from either during the day, and he decided that he was in love with Clowes.

A brisk walk through narrow dingy streets brought them, with some help from the police, to the door of Issy's house. Mitchell knocked and a grimy little Jewess opened to them.

"Mr Mendel Kühler?" said Mitchell.

"Upstairs to the top," replied the Jewess as she hurried away. They climbed the shabbily carpeted stairs and knocked at the door of the studio. Mendel opened it. He stood with a brush in his hand, blinking. He stared at Mitchell and then beyond him at Morrison.

"Come in," he said. "I'd just finished. I've been working rather hard and haven't spoken to a soul for three days. You must forgive me if I don't seem very intelligent."

They went in and he made tea for them, hardly ever taking his eyes off Morrison. He said pointedly to Mitchell:—

"So you came down to the East End to find me."

Clowes explained:—

"I'm a stranger to London and had never seen the docks, you know."

"I have never seen the docks either, though I live so near," said he. Then, catching Morrison glancing in the direction of his easel, he turned his work for her to see, almost ignoring the others. Afterwards he produced drawings for her to see, and he seemed entirely bent on pleasing her, which so embarrassed her that, when she could escape his gaze, she looked imploringly over at the others. They could not help her, and he went on until he had shown her every piece of work in the studio. Whenever she spoke, shyly and diffidently, as though she knew her opinion was of no value, he gave a queer little grunt of triumph, and his eyes glittered as he looked over at Mitchell, as though to say that he too knew how to treat the "top-knots" and to please them.

CHAPTER X

MORRISON

A FEW days later he wired to Morrison at the Detmold to ask her to sit for him. She made no reply and did not come.

Very well then: he would not budge. He would only approach Mitchell again through the "top-knots," who lived in a portion of Mitchell's world that had hitherto been closed to him. It promised new adventure, and he was so eager for it that he would not enter upon any other outside his work.

The days went by and he began a portrait of his mother, with which he intended to make his first appearance at an important exhibition. Golda sat dressed in her best on the throne, and tried vainly to soothe him as he cursed and stamped and wept over his difficulties.

"I can't do it! I can't do it!" he wailed. "I'm a fool, a blockhead, a pig! If I could only do one little thing more to it I could make it a great picture."

"You are always the same," said Golda. "In Austria, when you were a little boy, the soldiers made you a uniform like their own. They used to call you the Captain, and they saluted you in the street, only they forgot to give you any boots, and when the soldiers marched by, you stamped and roared because you were not allowed to go with them, and I could not make you understand that you were not a real captain."

"But I am a real artist," he growled. "You'll never make me understand that I am not a real artist."

"Nothing good was ever done in a hurry," said she. "If you run so fast you will break your head against a wall."

"I shall paint many portraits of you, for I shall never be satisfied. You may as well sit here with your hands folded as over there in the kitchen. If I'm not careful your hands will grow all over the picture. I have put such a lot of work into them."

Then for a long time he was silent, and both were lost in a dreamlike happiness—to be together, alone with his work, bound together in his delight as they used to be when he was a child before the invasion of their peace.

He went to the door in answer to a knock and found Morrison standing there with some flowers in her hands.

"Oh!" he said awkwardly, holding the door. "Won't you come in? Please. I am painting my mother."

Golda's eyes lighted with pleasure on the fresh-looking girl and her flowers.

"She is like a flower herself," she thought, and indeed the girl looked as though she were fresh from the country.

She held out her hand to Golda, who stood up on the throne and bobbed to her, then folded her hands on her stomach and waited patiently for the lady to break the awkwardness that had sprung up between the three of them. Mendel could do nothing. He looked from one to the other and felt, with a little tremor of horror, the gulf that separated the two.

At last Morrison said to Golda:—

"I am very glad to see you, though I feel I know you quite well from the drawings he has done of you."

Golda broke into inarticulate expressions of the delight it was to her to see any of her son's friends, and saying that she would have a special tea sent up, she edged towards the door and slipped out.

"Why didn't you come before?" asked Mendel, when he had heard the door bang. "I sent you a telegram. I wanted to paint your portrait, and now I have begun something else."

"I didn't want to come," replied she, "but something Mitchell said made me want to come."

"What did he say?"

"He told me about Kessler, and I thought it was a shame. I thought it was a horrible shame that you should be treated like that, as if anything mattered but your work."

Her voice rather irritated him. Her accent was rather mincing and precise, and between her sentences she gave a little gasp which he took for an affectation.

"Why did Mitchell tell you that?"

"He tells me a great deal about you, and he was really upset by your letter."

"Was he? Was he?"

Mendel had no thought but for Mitchell. He longed to go to him, to embrace him, to tell him that all was different now. He blurted it all out to the girl.

"We were so happy, the four of us together. Every evening we met and we were like kings. Everything that we wanted to do we did. We had money and success and all such foolish things, and we worked hard, all of us. There were not in London four young men like us, and I was free of the terrible people who wanted to turn me into an ordinary successful painter—a portrait painter. I tell you, I have never had a commission in my life that was not a failure. I only wanted to be young and to work, for I had never been young before. And then suddenly, out of nothing, my friends turned on me and told me I was a Jew and uneducated, and ought to treat them with more respect. Why? The Jews are good people, and what do I want with education? Can books teach me how to paint? I tell you the Jews are good people."

Tea was brought up on a lacquer tray—bread, jam, and cake. They were both hungry and fell to with a will, hardly speaking at all.

When they had finished they began to talk of pictures and of the lives of the painters, and he told her stories of Michael Angelo and Rembrandt: how Michael Angelo never took his boots off, and was never in love in his life; and how Rembrandt was practically starved to death. Then he showed her reproductions of Cranach and Dürer, whom at the time he adored, and they bent over them, the chestnut head and the curly black together. Gradually she led him on to tell of his own life, and he began at the beginning in Austria, holding her spell-bound with his vivid, picturesque talk.

"It makes me feel very quiet and dull," she said. "I don't think I ever regarded places outside England as real, somehow. There was just home and London, and London seemed to be the end of everything. All the trains stop there, you know."

"Where is your home?" he asked.

"In Sussex. It is very beautiful country."

"How did you come to the Detmold?"

"A girl at home had been there, and at school they said I was no good at anything but drawing. Indeed, I was sent away from two schools, and at home I was such a trouble that mother decided I must do something to earn my living. So I was sent up to the Detmold. I had my hair down my back then."

"I remember," said he. "In a plait."

She smiled with pleasure at that.

"Yes," she said. "In a plait. I lived in a hostel, where they bullied me because I was so untidy and was always being late for meals. At home, you know, there were only my brothers, and my mother could never keep them in order, and I was always treated as if I was a boy too. . . . And I think that's all."

She ended so lamely that his irritation got the better of him, and he jumped to his feet. It seemed to him that his view of the "top-knots" was confirmed. They were simply negligible. He was baffled, and stood staring down at her. Was she no more interested in herself than that? Comparing the smooth monotony of her life with his, he waxed impatient, and told himself he was a fool to have invited her to come to him.

He began to study her face with a view to painting it, and he was absorbed and fascinated by it. The lines of her cheek and of her neck made him itch to draw them.

"Yes," he said, "I must paint you. I can do something good. I'm sure I can."

"I wanted to ask if you would mind my painting you," she said.

He was aghast at her impudence. She, a slip of a girl, a "top-knot," paint the great Kühler!

She saw how horrified he was and added hastily:—

"Of course, I won't insist if you don't like sitting."

She rose to go and he begged her to stay.

"Don't go yet," he said with sudden emotion. "I don't want you to go. Somehow I feel as if you had been sitting there always and I don't want you to go. If you don't want to talk you needn't, but you must stay. I could see that my mother liked you at once, and she always knows good people. You made her happy about me. It was like sunshine to her when you came in, and I shall be wretched if you go, for I don't know what to think about you."

"I know what I think about you."

"What do you think?"

"You have made me feel that London isn't just a place where the trains stop."

And she began to tell him about her home and the river where she bathed with her brothers, the woods where in spring there were primroses and daffodils, and in summer bluebells.

"Opposite the house," she said, "is a hill which is a common, all covered with gorse in the summer, and the hot, nutty smell of it comes up and seems to burn your face. There are snakes on the common—vipers and adders and grass-snakes. From the top you can see the downs, and beyond them, you know, is the sea. On moonlight nights it is glorious, and I nearly go mad sometimes with running in and out of the shadows. I believe I did go mad once, for I sat up on the top of the hill and sang and shouted and cried, all by myself, and I felt that my heart would break if I did not kiss something. The gorse was out, and I buried my face in the dewy yellow flowers. . . . I often think the woods are like churches on Easter Day. . . . And then when I get home and it is just a house and I am just a girl living in it, you know, it all seems wrong somehow."

Mendel sat on the floor trying to puzzle out this mysterious rapture of hers. He had never heard of gorse or of downs, but he could recognise her emotion. He had had something like it the first time he saw a may-tree in blossom, and he had hardly been able to bear it. He had rather resented it, for it had interfered with his work for a day or two, and he could not help feeling that there was something indecent about an emotion with which he could do nothing.

"Yes," he said heavily; "it must be very pretty."

She shivered at the grotesqueness of his words as she sank back into her normal mood of happy diffidence. His face wore an expression of black anger as he darted quick, furious glances at her. Here was something that he did not understand, something that defied his mastery, and when she smiled he thought it was at himself, and this strange power that had been behind her appeared to him as a mocking, teasing spirit. Let it mock, let it tease! He was strong enough to defy it. Sweep through a green girl it might, but he was not to be caught by it. He knew better. In him it had tough simplicity to deal with and a will that had broken the confinement of Fate, the limits of a meagre religion, to bend before no authority but that of art. . . . He was rather contemptuous, too. Nothing as yet had resisted his genius, and he felt it within him stronger than ever, a river with a thousand sources. Block one channel and it would find another. Stop that and it would find yet another.

Yet here he knew was no direct, no open menace, only the intolerable suggestion that there were other streams, other sources, and the suggestion had come from this foolish, empty girl.

"I will not have it," he said half aloud.

"What did you say?" she asked.

"Nothing. I was thinking—I was thinking that there is nothing so good as London. They tried to send me to Italy, but I know that there is nothing so good as London for life, and where life is, there is art. I don't want your pretty places and your pretty feelings. I want to go through the streets and to see the girls in the evening leaving the shops, and the men in their bowler-hats looking at the girls and wanting them, and the fat men in their motor-cars, and the bookstalls on the railway stations, and the public-houses with their rows of bottles and the white handles of the beer machines, and the plump barmaids, and the long, straight streets going on for ever with the flat houses on either side of them, and the markets and the timber-yards and the tall chimneys. It all fills your mind and makes patterns and whirling thoughts that take a spiral shape, going up and up to mysterious heights. I want all that, and nothing shall take it from me, do you hear?"

He turned on her ferociously, as though she were trying to rob him.

"And inside it all is something solid," he went on. "Do you know that my father never loved but one woman in all his life? That's what Jews are. They know what's solid. If they have to stay in the filth to keep it, then they'll stay in the filth. And because I'm a Jew I'm not to be caught with your pretty things and your little fancies. I shall paint the things I understand, and I'll leave the clouds and the rainbows and the roofs and chimneys to fools like Mitchell."

Morrison sat very meekly while he talked. She hung her head and twitched her fingers nervously. She was elated by his passion, but she too had her dreams and was not going to surrender them. His strength had given her confidence in them and in herself, and she was filled with a teasing spirit.

"Jews aren't the only people who are solid," she said.

"You see men in buses and trains whom an earthquake wouldn't move, and I'm sure, if an earthquake happened, my mother would be left where she was, reading the Bible."

Mendel replied:—

"In a thousand years my mother will be just as she is now."

Morrison stared at him and began to wonder if he was not a little mad. He added simply:—

"I feel like that."

And she was relieved and thought he was the only sane person she had ever met in her life.

"Will you let me come again?" she asked.

"I am going to paint you," he said; "I am going to paint you as you are. You won't like it."

"I shall if you make me solid," she answered. "And you need flowers in this dark room. You must let me send you some."

BOOK TWO: BOHEMIA

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CHAPTER I

THE POT-AU-FEU

AT the exhibition, the portrait of Golda created no small stir. The critics, who, since Whistler, had been chary of denouncing new-comers, had swung to the opposite extravagance and were excessively eager to discover new masters. The youth of this Kühler made him fair game, for it supplied them with a proviso. They could hail his talent as that of a prodigy without commiting themselves.

"The portrait of the artist's mother," wrote one of them, "has all the essentials of great art, as the early compositions of Mozart had all the essentials of great music. Here is real achievement, a work of art instinct with racial feeling, and therefore of true originality. No trace here of Parisian experiments. This picture is in the direct line from Holbein and Dürer."

Mendel took this to mean that he was as good as Holbein and Dürer, and accepted it not as praise but as a statement of fact. The picture was bought by a well-known connoisseur, who wrote that he was proud to have being redeemed by a virtuous girl until now."

"Now," thought the proud painter, "my career has really begun."

For once in a way he regarded his success with his father's eyes and much as Moscowitsch would have regarded the successful coup in business for which he was always vainly striving. The hectic gambling spirit introduced by Hetty Finch had disappeared, and though he still devoted his leisure to Mitchell, their adventurousness was tempered by the tantalisation of the "top-knots," Morrison and Clowes. To counteract the disturbing effect of their coolness, Mendel became very Jewish and hugged his success, gloating over it rather like a cat over a stolen piece of fish.

Morrison's indifference to the buzz about his name was especially maddening, because he wished to prove to her that in painting dwelt a joy beside which her trumpery little ecstasy in woods and flowers was nothing, nothing at all. He wished to convince himself that he had not been really disturbed by her first visit to his studio. Only the shock of novelty he had felt, and by his success, by his triumphant work, he had obliterated it. . . . She was nothing, he told himself, only a raw girl, smooth and polished by her easy life, good for nothing except to be made love to by such as Mitchell.

Love? They called it love when a young man clasped a maiden's hand, or when they kissed and rode together on the tops of buses! These Christians were rather disgusting with all their talk of love. He had heard more talk of it in three years of contact with them than in all his life before, and Weldon and others had talked of love in connection with Hetty Finch.

Disgusting!

And now here was Mitchell babbling of his love for

Morrison. When Mendel wanted to talk of pictures and art and the old painters who had worked simply without reference to success, Mitchell kept dragging him back to Morrison, her simplicity, her extraordinary childlike innocence, her love of beauty, her generous trustfulness, her queer sudden impulses.

"What has such a girl as that to do with art or with artists?" said Mendel furiously. "An artist wants women as he wants his food, when he has time for them."

"Gawd!" says Mitchell, trotting along by his side; "you don't know what you are talking about. I tell you I never believed all that trash about a young man being redeemed by a virtuous girl until now."

"It's nonsense!" shouted Mendel; "nonsense, I tell you. It must be nonsense, because it didn't matter to you whether it was Clowes or Morrison, and for all I know, it may be both."

"Clowes is a jolly nice girl too," replied Mitchell, "but she's more ordinary. I never met any one like Morrison before. I can't make her out, but she does make me feel that I am an absolute rotter. It is her fresh enjoyment of simple things that disturbs me and makes me see what a mess I've made of my life. Once an artist loses that, he is finished."

They had been reading Tolstoi on "What is Art?" and their young conceit had been put out by it. Must their extraordinary powers produce work accessible to the smallest intelligence? Mendel had been greatly influenced by that theory in his portrait of his mother, while Mitchell's energy had been paralysed so that he could produce nothing at all.

"Yes," Mitchell went on, "I know now what Tolstoi means. He means that love can speak direct to love, and, by Jove! it is absolutely true. Brains are only a nuisance to an artist. Look at Calthrop! He hasn't got the brains of a louse. Of course, that is why painters are such an ignorant lot. I must tell my father that when he goes for me for not reading."

"But Tolstoi liked bad artists!" grumbled Mendel. "And my mother does not like some of my best things. As for my father, he wants a painted bread to look as if he could eat it: never is he satisfied just to look at it. His love and my love are not the same and cannot speak to each other."

"You should see more of Morrison, and then you would understand," rejoined Mitchell.

Mendel felt that Mitchell was slipping away from him, and all this Christian talk of love was to him a corrosion upon his imagination and his nervous energy, blurring and distorting everything that he valued. There were many things that he hated, and yet because he hated them their interest for him was consuming. Issy's wife, for instance, and her squalling children; his father's bitter tongue; and Mitchell's odd self-importance.

He repeated:—

"Tolstoi liked bad artists."

"You can't settle a big man like Tolstoi just by repeating phrases about him."

"I can settle him by painting good pictures," retorted Mendel. "I don't paint pictures to please people."

"Then why do you paint?"

"I don't know. To be an artist. Because there is a thing called art which matters to me more than all the love and all the women and all the little girls in the world."

"Ah!" sighed Mitchell. "You'll soon think differently. I shall never do another stroke of work without thinking of Greta standing on Kew Bridge and looking up the river at the boats with their white sails."

"Will you be quiet?" cried Mendel; "will you be quiet with your little girls and white sails?"

Mitchell seemed to be slipping away from him, and he dreaded the thought of being left alone with his success, which was blowing a bulb of glass round him, so that he felt imprisoned in it, and wherever he looked could see nothing but reflections of himself, Mendel Kühler, painting his mother, and his father, and old Jews and loaves and fishes for ever and ever. While he clung to Mitchell he knew that he could not be so encased, but Mitchell demanded that he should go out with him into a world all glowing with love, with rivers of milk and honey and meadows pied with buttercups and daisies; to stand on airy bridges and gaze at innocent little girls and white sails. The contemplation of this world revolted him, and he stiffened himself against it. Better the smells and the dirt than such fantastical stuff. His gorge rose against it.

To wean Mitchell from his amorous fancies he pretended that he was tired and wanted a holiday, and together they went down to a village on the South Coast near Brighton. There it was almost as it had been in the beginning. For a fortnight they were never out of each other's company. They slept in one bed and shared each other's clothes, paints, and money. They sketched the same subjects, took tremendous walks, and in the evening they talked as though there were no London, no Paris Café, no exhibitions, no dealers, no critics, nothing but themselves and their friendship and their artistic projects. Mendel was supremely happy. Never had he known such intimacy since the days of Artie Beech.

But Mitchell was often depressed and moody. He had letters every day, and every evening he wrote at great length.

One morning he had a letter which he crumpled up dramatically and thrust into his trousers pocket.

"Gawd!" he said. "That's put the lid on it. I'm done for."

"What is it?" asked Mendel, aghast.

"I'll tell you when we get back to London. We must go back this afternoon. Eight o'clock in the Pot-au-Feu."

The Pot-au-Feu was a little restaurant in Soho which Mitchell, Weldon, and some others had endeavoured to render immortal by decorating it with panels. In a room above it lived Hetty Finch.

Mendel's thoughts flew to her, a figure of ill omen. He had not seen her for some time, and had imagined that she had so successfully got all she wanted and was so thoroughly established in her composite profession that she had no time for the younger artists. He had heard tales about her, and fancied she would succeed in hooking one of the older men for a husband.

He said:—

"Why do you want to go back to that beastly place? Here it is good. I could stay here for six months."

"Gawd!" said Mitchell dismally. "'Tis life. There's absolutely no getting away from it. Everything is swallowed up and nothing is left."

He became very solemn and added:—

"If anything happens to me, Kühler, I want you to go to Greta Morrison and tell her that through everything I never forgot my happiness with her."

"Happen!" cried Mendel. "What can happen?"

"I'll tell you to-night," replied Mitchell gloomily, "at the Pot-au-Feu."

And not another word did he say, neither during their morning's work, nor during lunch, nor in the train, nor in the taxi-cab that took them to Soho.

"You wait outside," said Mitchell mysteriously.

Mendel waited outside and paced up and down, oppressed with the idea that his friendship with Mitchell was at an end. He was left helpless and exposed, for all that had been built on the friendship had come toppling down, and with it came the extra personality he had developed for dealing with the Detmold and the polite world—the Kühler who had assiduously learned manners and phrases, vices and enthusiasms, as a part to be played at the Paris Café and in the drawing-rooms of the languid ladies who were interested in art and artists. Hetty Finch went with it, for she had been an adjunct of that personality. . . . He was glad to be rid of her, and shook her off, plucked her out of his mind like a burr that was stuck upon it.

After a quarter of an hour or so Mitchell came out more mysterious than ever, took his arm and led him into the restaurant, which was hardly bigger than an ordinary room. Full of vigour and health as he was, Mendel felt an enormous size in it, as though he must knock over the tables and thrust his elbows through the painted panels. Madame Feydeau, the proprietress, greeted him with a wide smile and said she had missed him lately. At his table was the goggle-eyed man who dined there every night with his newspaper open in front of him. Weldon and a girl with short hair were sitting in uncomfortable silence, both with the air of doing a secret thing. Near the counter, with its dishes of fruit and coffee-glasses, was Hetty Finch, rather drawn and pinched in the face and very dark under the eyes.

Mendel was filled with impatience. She had no business to be sitting there, for he had disposed of her, and she made everything seem fantastic and unreal. He shook hands with her and sat at the table. Mitchell took the chair next to Hetty and talked to her in an undertone, while her eyes turned on Mendel with a frightened, inquiring expression.

"All right," he said, as though he had understood her question. "I know when to hold my tongue."

Mitchell went on whispering, and every now and then he bowed his head and clenched his fists, as though he were racked with inexpressible emotions. He too had become fantastic. Mendel knew that he was play-acting, and with a sickening dread he went back over all he knew of Mitchell, recognising this same play-acting in much that he had accepted as genuine. Yet he would not believe it, for Mitchell was his friend, and therefore never to be criticised.

Would neither of them speak? Food was laid before him, and he ate it without tasting it. Mitchell led Hetty away to another table and talked to her impressively there. Then he brought her back and went on with his whispering.

Coffee was laid before Mendel, and he drank it without tasting it.

At last Hetty said, in a loud voice that rang through the room:—

"No. I will take nothing from you. I ask nothing from you, not a penny."

"By God," said Mitchell, hanging his head, "I deserve it."

Hetty turned to Mendel and asked him sweetly to buy her a bottle of wine, as she needed something to pick her up.

"You are a devil," she said, "sitting there as though nothing had happened. But I always said you were a devil and no good. I always said so, but I have my friends and can be independent."

"Don't be a fool," said he roughly. "You'll have a short run, and you'd better find something to fall back on while you can."

"Get your hair cut!" she replied. "I know which side my bread's buttered, and the old men aren't so sharp as the young ones. You've got a fool's tongue in your clever head, Kühler, and a fool's tongue makes enemies."

"Shut up!" he said. "And you leave Mitchell alone. He hasn't done you any harm."

"Ho! Hasn't he?" she cried.

Mitchell groaned, and, giving a withering glance at the two of them, Hetty gathered up her vanity-bag and gloves and walked out of the restaurant.

"She's a slut!" said Mendel. "She always was a slut and always will be."

"Gawd!" cried Mitchell. "It was you let her loose on the town, and I shall never hold up my head again. I shall never be able to face my people. I shall just let myself be swallowed up in London. . . . But I shan't trouble any of my friends. When I'm a pimp I shan't mind if you look the other way. After all, it isn't so far to fall. There's not much difference between the ordinary artist and a pimp."

"What has she done to you?" cried Mendel furiously. "Why do you let yourself be put down by a drab like that?"

"She's not a drab," said Mitchell, in a curious thin voice of protest. "She is the mother of my child."

Mendel brought his fist down on the table with a thump, so that the cups jumped from their saucers.

"She is what?"

"The mother of my child," said Mitchell, burying his face in his hands. "I have offered to marry her, to make an honest woman of her, but she refuses, and she will take nothing from me. Gawd! How can I ever face Morrison again? How can I face my mother?"

"Rubbish! Rubbish! Rubbish!" cried Mendel. "Why you? Why not Weldon—why not Calthrop?" He saw the goggle-eyed man listening eagerly and lowered his voice. "A drab like that deserves all she gets. She takes her risks, and I'll say this for her, that she does not complain. She's clever enough to know how to deal with it. . . ."

He wanted to say a great deal more, but realised that Mitchell, intent upon his own emotions, was not listening to him. Also, through the fantastic atmosphere, he began to be aware of a reality powerful and horrible. Against it Hetty seemed to be of no account, and Mitchell's excitement was palpably false.

This reality had been called into being by no one's will, and therefore it was horrible.

"I shall have to disappear," said Mitchell.

Mendel did not hear him speak. His own will was aroused by the devastating reality. Because it was physical he exulted in it, and his will struggled to master it. He could not endure his friend's helplessness and he wanted above all to help him, to make him see that this thing was at least powerful; evil and ugly, perhaps, but much too vital to be subdued or conquered by fantasy and theatrical emotions. He found Mitchell bewildering. Sentimentality always baffled him, for it seemed to him so superficial as to be not worth bothering about and so complicated as to defy unravelling. He knew that Mitchell was horrified and afraid, and that it was natural enough, but fear was not a thing to be encouraged. He said:

"Hetty knows perfectly well that she can manage it better without you."

"I know," replied Mitchell. "That's what makes me feel such an awful worm."

Mendel lost all patience. If a man was going to take pleasure in feeling a worm, there was nothing to be done with him. He called the waiter, paid the bill, and stumped out of the Pot-au-Feu leaving Mitchell staring blankly at the goggle-eyed man.

A few days later he met Edgar Froitzheim leaving the National Gallery as he entered it.

"Oh! Kühler," said Froitzheim. "The very man I wanted to see. I am very proud about the picture—very proud. But I wanted to see you about young Mitchell. He is a friend of yours, isn't he? He is behaving very badly to a young model. Such a pretty girl. Hetty Finch. You know her? She is in trouble through him, and he refused to do anything for her. I'm told he has Nietzschean ideas. I sent for the girl. It is a very sad story and I have raised a subscription for her: fifty pounds to see her through. . . . Do try and bring Mitchell to reason."

"I'll do what I can," replied Mendel, and he walked on to pay his daily homage to Van Eyck and Chardin, who were his heroes at the time.

That evening at the Paris Café he heard of another subscription having been raised for Hetty, and Calthrop growled and grumbled and said he had given her twenty pounds.

Mendel reckoned it up and he found that she was being paid for her delinquency more than he could hope to receive for many months of painful work.

As he finished his calculation he was amazed to see Mitchell come in with Morrison, whom he had declared he could never face again, and when Mendel rose to go over and join them she gave him only a curt little nod which told him plainly that he was not wanted.

CHAPTER II

LOGAN

ONCE again Mendel decided that Mitchell, and with him London life, had fallen away from him. The Paris Café could never be the same again, and he plunged into despair, and thought seriously of accepting a Jewish girl with four hundred pounds whom a match-maker offered to him. Four hundred pounds was not to be sneezed at. It would keep him going for some years, so that he need not think of selling his pictures, which he always hated to part with. And the girl was just bearable.

The figure delighted his father and mother, for it showed them the high opinion of their wonder-son held among their own people.

It was terrible to him to find that he had very little pleasure in his work, which very often gave him excruciating pain. He took it to mean that he was coming to an end of his talent. Night after night he sat on his bed feeling that he must make an end of his life, but always there was some piece of painting that he must do in the morning, painful though it might be.

He had letters from Mitchell, but did not answer them, and at last "the schoolboy," as Golda called him, turned up, gay and smiling and rather elated.

"I've discovered a great man," he said with the awkward, jerky gesture he used in his more eloquent moments. "Absolutely a great man. Reminds me of Napoleon. Wonderful head, wonderful! His name is Logan—James Logan—and he wants to know you. He is a painter, and absolutely independent. He comes from the North—Liverpool or one of those places. I haven't seen his work, but I met him at the Pot-au-Feu the other night. He asked me if I was not a friend of yours, as he thought he had seen me with you. He said: 'Kühler is the only painter of genius we have.' I spent the evening with him. I never heard such talk. It made the old Detmold seem like a girls' school. . . . Hallo! Still-life again? What a rum old stick you are for never going outside your four walls!"

"What I paint is inside me, not outside," said Mendel, trembling with rage at Mitchell looking at his work before he had offered to show it.

"Will you come and see Logan?"

"No. I am sick of painters. I want to know decent people."

"But I promised I would bring you, and he admires your work. He is poor too, as poor as you are."

"Can't he sell?"

"It isn't that so much as that he doesn't try. He says he had almost despaired of English painting until he saw your work."

"How old is he?"

"A good deal older than us. Twenty-six, I should think."

"Why don't you just stick to me?" asked Mendel. "What more do you want? Why must you always go off on a new track? First it's Hetty Finch, then it's Morrison, and now it's this new man. We were happy enough by ourselves. Why do you want anything more? I don't."

"You're used to living on dry bread. I'm not. I want butter with mine, and jam, if I can get it."

"Then get it and don't bother me to go chasing after it. I want to work."

"Oh, rot! All that stuff about artists starving in garrets is out of date. It only happened because they couldn't find patrons, but nowadays there are dealers and buyers. . . . Just look at the money you are making."

"Then why is this Logan poor?"

"He isn't known yet. He doesn't know the artists because he never went to a London school. He was doing quite well in the North, but threw it all up because he couldn't stand living in such a filthy town. He had a teaching job somewhere in Hammersmith, but he threw that up because he wanted his time to himself."

"That sounds as if painting means something to him."

"Do come and see him."

"Oh! very well."

"I'll send him a wire and we'll go to-night."

They dined at the Pot-au-Feu, and later made the expedition to Hammersmith, where they came to a block of studios surrounded by a scrubby garden. These studios were large and well-kept and did not tally with the description of Logan's poverty. Still less did the inside give any sign of it. There was a huge red-brick fireplace, surmounted by old brass and blue china, with great armchairs on either side of it: there were Persian rugs on the floor; two little windows were filled in with good stained glass, which Mendel knew to be costly; there were two or three large easels; and the walls were hung with tapestry. The whole effect was deliberately and preciously rich.

Logan, who had admitted them to this vast apartment, rushed back at once to a very large easel on which he had a very small canvas, and fell to work on it with a furious energy, darting to and fro and stamping his right foot rather like the big trumpet man in a German band. He was a medium-sized, plumpish man, with a big, strongly featured face, big chin, and compressed lips, and long black hair brushed back from a round, well shaped brow. He frowned and scowled at his work. A woman came out of a door and crossed the studio behind him. He hurled his palette into the air so that it sailed up and fell with a crash among the brass pots, and barked:—

"How can I work with these constant interruptions? Damn it all, an artist must have peace!"

He flung his arms behind his back and paced moodily to and fro, with his head down and his lips pursed up *à la* Beethoven. He extended the sphere of his pacing gradually so that he came nearer and nearer to Mendel, yet without noticing him. Mendel was tremendously excited and impressed with the man's air of mystery and force. It was like Calthrop, but without his awkwardness. Mitchell in comparison looked puny and absurdly young.

Nearer and nearer came Logan, and at last he stopped and fixed Mendel with a baleful stare, and swung his head up and down three times.

"So you are Kühler?" he said.

Mendel opened his lips, but to his astonishment no sound came out of them. So desperately anxious was he not to cut a poor figure before this remarkable man, and not to seem, like Mitchell, pathetically young.

"Good!" said Logan. "Shake hands." And he crushed Mendel's thin fingers together. "What I like about you," he went on, "is your sense of form. Design is all very well in its way, but quite worthless without form."

Mendel, whose work was still three parts instinctive, could not attach any precise meaning to these expressions, but he was well up in the jargon of his craft and could make a good show.

"Art," said Logan, "is an exacting mistress. Shall we go and have a drink?"

He put on his hat and led the two marvelling youngsters to a public-house, where he became a different man altogether. The compression of his lips relaxed, his eyes twinkled and his face shone with good humour, and he made them and the barmaid and the two or three men who were shyly taking their beer roar with laughter. He had an extraordinary gift of mimicry, and told story after story, many of them against himself, most of them without point, but in the telling exceedingly comic. Mendel sat up and bristled. It was to him half shocking, half enviable, that a man, and an artist, should be able to laugh at himself.

"If you'll give me free drinks for a month," said Logan to the elderly barmaid, "I'll paint your portrait. Are you married? . . . No? I'll paint you such a beautiful portrait that it will get you a husband inside a week."

"I'm not on the marrying lay," said the barmaid.

"Terrible thing, this revolt against marriage," replied Logan, "and bad luck on us artists. I'm always getting babies left on my doorstep."

"What do you do with them?" said Mendel, believing him, and astonished when the others roared with laughter.

"I keep the pretty ones and sell them to childless mothers. Ah! Many's the time I've gone through the snow, like the heroine in a melodrama taking her child to the workhouse."

"Oh! go on," tittered the barmaid.

"Certainly," said Logan. "Come along."

As they left the public-house he took Mendel's arm and said:—

"You have to talk to people in their own language, you know."

"Yes," replied Mendel, though this was precisely what he knew least of all.

"Why don't you go on the stage?" asked Mitchell.

"I have thought of it. I think I might do well on the halls. There's a life for you! On at eight in Bethnal Green:—

> My old woman's got a wart on her nose;
> How she got it I will now disclose.

Off again in a motor-car to the Oxford:—

> My old woman's got a wart on her nose.

Off again to Hammersmith or Kensal Rise:—

> My old woman's got a wart on her nose.

My God! What a life! But I love the halls. They are all that is left of old England!"

His parody of the low comedian was so apt and his voice had such a delicious roll that Mendel could not help laughing, and he began to feel very happy with the man.

Logan swung back to his serious mood and gripped Mendel's arm tighter as he said:—

"You have a big future before you. Only stick to it. Don't listen to the fools who want you to paint the same picture over and over again with a different subject.

There's more stuff in that one little picture of yours than in all the rest of the exhibition put together."

"Do you think so?" said Mendel, fluttering with excitement.

"I was amazed when I heard you had been to the Detmold with its Calthrop and all the little Calthrops."

Both the youngsters were silent on that. They had often abused the Detmold, but with a profound respect in their hearts, and both had done their full share of imitating Calthrop.

When they reached the studio Mitchell suggested going, but Logan would not hear of it. He dragged them in and produced whisky and soda, and kept them talking far into the small hours. His bouncing energy kept Mendel awake and alert, but Mitchell was soon exhausted and fell asleep.

"Shall we put him out of the way?" said Logan suddenly. "No one would know, and the river is handy. He is too clean, too soft, and there are too many like him. They are in the way of real men like you and me."

Mendel was appalled to find that he could not defend his friend. All the discontents of his waning friendship came rushing up in him and he began to babble violently.

"He is a liar and a coward, and he will never be an artist because he is too weak. He is not true. He is not good. I have trusted him with my secrets and he tells. He is always ashamed of me because of my clothes and because I have not been to Public School, and he is jealous because when we meet women they like me. He is soft and deceitful with them, but I am honest, and they like that. I wanted him to be my friend, but it is impossible."

"He is an Englishman," said Logan sepulchrally, with the air of a Grand Inquisitor.

"Aren't you an Englishman?"

"No, Scotch and French. These Englishmen have no passions, unless they are mad like Blake. . . . No, no. We'll drop Mitchell overboard. We'll make him walk the plank, and fishes in the caverns of the sea shall eat his eyes."

Logan was beginning to assume enormous proportions in Mendel's eyes. It seemed that there was nothing the tremendous fellow did not know. He began to talk of genius and the stirring of the creative impulse, and he gave so powerful an account of Blake that Mendel began to see visions of heaven and hell. Here was something which he could acknowledge as larger than himself without self-humiliation, and, indeed, the larger it loomed the more swiftly did he himself seem to grow. It was such a sensation as he had not known since the days before his rapture with Sara. All that had intervened fell away. That purity of passion returned to him and, choosing Logan for its object, rushed upon him and endowed him with its own power and beauty. Logan talking of Blake was to Mendel's innocence as rare as Blake, and he adored him.

"I had almost given up art," said Logan; "I had almost given it up as hopeless. How can there be art in a despiritualised country like this, that lets all its traditions rot away? I was just on the point of tossing up whether I should go on the stage or take to spouting at the street corners; for when a country is in such a condition that its artists are stifled, then it is ripe for revolution. I am instinctive, you know, like Napoleon. I feel that we are on the threshold of something big, and that I am to have my share in it. I used to think it would happen in art, but I despaired of that. It seemed to me that art in this country could go doddering on for generations, and then I thought it needed a political upheaval to push it into its grave. But when I saw your work, I said to myself: Here is the real thing, alive, personal, profound, skilled. I began to hope again. And now that I have met you I feel more hopeful still, and, let me tell you, like most painters, I don't find it easy to like another man's work."

Mendel was fired. Trembling in every limb, he said:—

"It has been the dream of my life to find a friend who would work with me, think with me, go with me, share with me, not quarrelling with me because I am not this, that, and the other, but accepting me as I am—a man who has no country, no home, no love but art."

"That," said Logan, with a portentous scowl and a downward jab of his thumb, "is what I have been looking for—some one, like yourself, who was absolutely sincere, absolutely single-minded and resolute. The spirit of art has brought us together. We will serve it together."

They shook hands like young men on the stage, and Logan fetched a deep sigh of relief.

Mitchell woke up, saying:—

"Gawd! I've been asleep. Have you two been talking? Gawd! It's two o'clock."

"I'll walk home with you," said Logan. "We can keep to the river nearly the whole way by going from side to side."

So they walked while the tide came up, sucking and lapping, while the red dragons' eyes of the barges came swinging up on it, moving up and down in a slow, irregular rhythm. It was very cold and the sky was thickly powdered with stars, whose pin-prick lights were reflected in the smooth water.

Upon the dome of the young artist's vision that had before been black with infinite space, stars shone with a tender light. He was in ecstasy, and seemed to be skimming above the ground, hardly touching it with his feet. This long walk was like an exquisite dance, while Logan's rollings were like a pipe. . . . Often he sank into a dream that he was upon a grassy hill in a mountainy place, he and his friend, who played upon a pipe so mournfully yet gaily while he danced, and from the trees fell silvery dewdrops and the songs of birds, which turned into pennies as they reached the ground and rolled away down the hill.

Both he and Logan were relieved when Mitchell, who had interrupted them with inappropriate remarks, turned aside at Vauxhall and vanished into London.

"So much for Mitchell," said Logan. "You and I need sterner stuff. You and I are sprung from those among whom life is lived bravely and bitterly, and we have no use for its parasites. You and I will only emerge from the bitterness on condition that we can make of life a spiritual thing, for we are of those who seek authority. Life has none to offer us now, for all the forms of life are broken. Neither above us nor below is there authority, neither in heaven nor in hell. We must seek authority within ourselves, in the marriage of heaven and hell, in the consummation of good and evil, the two poles of our nature. It is for us, the artists, to bring them together, to liberate good and evil in ourselves, that they may rush to the consummation. We are the priests and the prophets, and we must in no wise be false to our vision."

Mendel could not fit all this in with his mood and his delicious dreams, and when it brought him back to his sober senses, he could not see what it had to do with painting. However, Logan put things right by saying:—

"You are a poet. You are like Heine. I can see you with your little Josepha the pale, the executioner's daughter. God rot my soul! It is years since I had such inspiration as you have given me. I think there must be Jewish blood in me, for I can certainly understand you through and through, and you have waked something in me that has always been asleep. Oh! we shall paint bonny pictures—bonny, bonny pictures."

"You must come to see me every day," said Mendel, "and every night we will go out together, and I must introduce you to my mother, for she too has good words."

Logan smacked his lips as they entered the grimy streets near Spitalfields.

"Pah!" he said; "that's life, that is, good dirty life. I was littered in a farm-yard myself and I like a good smell. . . . Can you put me up to-night? I don't mind sleeping on the floor."

"You can have my bed," said Mendel, "and I will sleep downstairs on my brother's sofa. Please—please. Do sleep in my bed."

Logan accepted the offer and asked Mendel to stay with him while he undressed. He was unpleasantly fat, but strong and well-built.

He stayed for a long time in front of the mirror.

"See that bulge on the side of my head?" he said as he turned.

Mendel looked, and sure enough his head had a curious bulge on its right side.

"I had rickets when I was young," said Logan, "and my skull must have got pushed over. I expect that's what makes me what I am—lopsided. I need you to balance me."

He got into bed, and Mendel, reluctant to leave him, sat at his feet and devoured him with his eyes.

"Surely, surely, now," he thought, "all is perfect now. No more disturbances, no more Mitchells, no more Hettys, and I shall do only what I really wish to do."

He stole out into his studio, which was faintly lit from the street below, and it was as though it were filled with some vast spiritual presence, and he imagined how he would work, urged on by this new energy that came welling up through all that he could see, all that he could know, all that he could remember.

CHAPTER III

LOGAN SETS TO WORK

IN the morning he was awakened by his sister-in-law, Rosa, shaking him and saying:—

"Mendel! Mendel! What are you doing on the sofa? Wake up! Wake up! There is some one in your studio."

The house was ringing with Logan's voice chanting the *Magnificat*. Mendel ran upstairs and found him in bed with a box of cigarettes and the New Testament, that fatal book, on his knees.

"Hello!" he said. "I hope I didn't wake you up. I have been awake for a couple of hours looking at your work. I hope you don't mind. There's a still-life there that's a gem, as good as Chardin, and even better, for there's always something sentimental about Chardin—always the suggestion of the old folks at home, the false dramatic touch, the idea of the hard-working French peasant coming in presently to eat the bread and drink the wine. I think it's time you were written up in the papers. It's absurd for a man like you to have to wait for success. There's no artistic public in England, so you can't be successful in your own way. The British public must have its touch of melodrama. To accept a man's work it must first have him shrouded in legend.

He must be a myth. His work must seem to come from some supernatural source."

"I'll just run over and tell my mother you are here," said Mendel. "I always have breakfast there, and then go for a walk while the studio is dusted."

"Right you are! I'll be up in half a jiffy. Can I have a bath?"

"No. There's no bath."

"Very well; I can do without for once."

Mendel ran round to Golda and told her of the wonderful man who was in his studio, and he described the adventure of the previous evening. Golda looked scared and said:—

"What next? What next? Good people sleep in their own beds."

"But this man is an artist and he talks like a book."

"Talk is easy," said Golda. "But it takes years to make a friend."

However, when Logan was brought to her she was polite to him and rather shy. He told her that fame was coming to her son faster than the wind.

"Too fast," said she.

"It can never come too fast," replied Logan. "The thirst for fame is a curse to an artist. Let it be satisfied and he is free for his work. I know, for I was very famous in my own town. I sickened of it and ran away. . . . I must congratulate you on letting your son follow his bent. I had to quarrel with my own people to get my way. I haven't seen them since I was fourteen."

"Not your mother?" said Golda, greatly upset.

Logan saw that he had made an awkward impression and hastened to put it right by saying lugubriously:—

"My mother is dead. She forgave me."

He allowed that to sink in and was silent for a minute or two. Then he chattered on gaily and asked Golda to come and see him, and bragged about his studio and his work and his friends, and of a commission he had to decorate a large house in a West End square. He talked so fast that Golda understood very little of what he said, but she never took her eyes off him, and when he said good-bye, Mendel noticed that she did not bob to him as she did to Mitchell and Morrison and his other polite friends. He took that to mean that she accepted Logan as a person above these formalities.

For an hour they walked through the streets and squares of the East End, Mendel proud to display the vivid scenes he intended later on to make into pictures.

When they returned to the studio Logan insisted on seeing all the pictures and drawings again.

"Are you in touch with any dealer?" he asked.

"Cluny has a few pictures and a dozen drawings. He never does anything with them."

"Hum!" said Logan. "Dealers are mysterious people. They can only sell things that sell themselves. By the way, I am giving up my studio in Hammersmith. It is too far away. I shall come nearer in. Hammersmith was all very well while I needed isolation, but that is all over now."

"Where shall you go to?"

"Bloomsbury, I think. I like to be near the British Museum. Do you go to the British Museum? I must show you round. It is no good going there unless you know what to look for. By the way, I came out without any money last night. Can you lend me five pounds?"

Mendel wrote a cheque and handed it to him shamefacedly.

"I want to pay a bill on my way home," said Logan. "I hate being in debt, especially for colours."

"I get my colours from Cluny," said Mendel, "and he sets them against anything he may sell."

The irruption of money had depressed him, and he began to realise that he was very tired. The springs of Rosa's sofa had bored into him and prevented his getting any real sleep.

He was not sorry when Logan went, after making him promise to meet him at the Pot-au-Feu for dinner.

He had a model coming at eleven, but when she arrived he sent her away. He was sore and dissatisfied. The studio seemed dark and dismal, and he could not get enough light on to his work. He took it right up to the window, but still there was not enough light, and his picture looked dull and dingy. His nerves throbbed and he was troubled in spirit, for now his old dreams of painting quietly among his own people while fame gathered about his name had suddenly become childish and pathetic. He was ignorant, futile, conceited, a pigmy by the side of the gigantic Logan, who would not wait upon the world, but would compel its attention and shape it to his will. What had he said artists were? Priests and prophets? . . . How could a man prophesy with a painting of a fish?

Downstairs he heard Issy come in for his dinner, and there was the usual snarling row because Rosa cooked so vilely. Mendel compared Issy's life and his own: Issy working day in, day out, earning just enough to keep himself alive. Why did he go on with it? Why did he keep himself alive? Why did he not clear out, like Harry? There was no pleasure in his life, neither the time nor the money for it. . . . A wretched business.

But was it less wretched than this business of painting? There was more money in painting, and that was all anybody seemed to think of. People wanted the same picture over and over again, and if he consented to please them, his life would be just as poor a thing as Issy's, except that he would have pleasure, and, through his friends, an occasional taste of luxury. At best he could be polite and gentlemanly, like Mitchell, bringing no more to art and getting no more out of it than a boyish excitement, as though art were a game and could give no more than a sensation of cleanliness, like a hot bath.

No, it would not do. It would not do.

It was a lie, too, to say that the Jews only cared about money. When they were overfed, like Maurice Birnbaum, they were like all the other overfed people, but when they were simple and normal they were better than the others, because they had always a sense of mystery and did not waste themselves in foolish laughter.

That was where Logan was true. He could laugh, because all the Christians laugh, but when it came to solemn things he could talk about them as though he were not half ashamed. Mitchell, for instance, always shied away from the truth. Why was he afraid of it? The truth, good or bad, was always somehow beautiful, invigorating, and releasing. All the pleasant things that Mitchell cared about Mendel found stifling. Nothing, he knew, could make life altogether pleasant, and all the falsehoods which were used in that attempt were contemptible. They strangled impulse and frankness, and without these how could there be art?

In his unhappy dreams Logan appeared like a figure of Blake, immense, looming prophetic, beckoning to achievement and away from the chatter and fuss of the world of artists.

Yet behind Logan there was still the figure of Mitchell, young and gay, and the idea of Mitchell led to the idea of Morrison.

There were some withered flowers on his painting-table, the last she had sent him. None had come since that evening in the Paris Café when she had nodded curtly to show him that he was not wanted.

He would not be thrust aside like that. He knew himself to be worth a thousand Mitchells. Logan had said that Mitchell was rubbish, and not even in the eyes of a slip of a girl would Mendel have Mitchell set above himself. Not for one moment was it tolerable. He would keep Morrison to her promises and make her come to have her portrait painted, and he would find out what there was in her that made him remember her so distinctly and so clearly separate her from all other girls. Somehow the thought of her cooled the intoxication in which he had been left by Logan. She offered, perhaps, another way out of his present state of congestion and dissatisfaction. Very clearly she brought back to his mind the thrilling delight with which he had worked as a boy, and that was true, truer than anything else he had ever known. . . . Ah! If he could only get back to that, with all the tricks and cunning he had learned.

He would get back to it some day, but he must fight for it; with Logan he would learn how to fight. Logan would lay his immense store of knowledge before him, and give him books to read, and teach him how to be so easy and familiar with ideas, which at present only frothed in his mind like waves thinning themselves out on the sea-shore.

He wrote an impassioned and insolent letter to Morrison commanding her presence at his studio and informing her that he was worth a thousand of her ordinary associates, and that she had hurt him, and that girls ought not to hurt men of acknowledged talent. This letter cost him a great deal of pain and time, because he was careful not to make any slip in spelling or grammar. It was more a manifesto than a letter, and he wished to do nothing to impair its dignity.

And all the time he was puzzled to know why he should care about her at all. He was prepared to throw everything—his success, the Detmold, his friends—to the winds to follow Logan, but Morrison he could not throw away.

He decided at last not to send the letter but to go himself, and he went to the Detmold just as the light was fading and he knew she would be leaving.

She had gone already, but he met Clowes, who, he knew, lived with her. He pounced on her and said:—

"You must come to tea with me."

"I'm afraid I . . ."

"You must! You must!"

She saw he was very excited and she had heard stories of his bursting into tears when he was thwarted. In some alarm she consented to go with him.

He led her to a teashop, a horrible place that smelt of dishwater and melted butter, made her sit at a table, and burst at once into a tirade:—

"You are Morrison's friend. Will you tell me why she has avoided me? She came to my studio once and she said she would come again. She sent me flowers for three weeks, but she has sent no more."

"She—she is very forgetful," said Clowes, who was longing for tea but did not dare to tell him to turn to the waitress, who was hovering behind him.

"But she nodded to me as if she had hardly met me before," said Mendel.

"She is very shy," said Clowes, framing the word "Tea" with her lips and nodding brightly to the waitress. She added kindly:—

"I don't think sending flowers means much with her. She gives flowers to heaps of people. She is a very odd girl."

"Does she give flowers to Mitchell?" he asked furiously, coming at last with great relief to the consuming thought in his mind.

"Yes," said Clowes. "She is very unhappy about Mitchell and that Hetty Finch affair."

"Has he told her then?"

"Yes."

"Why did he tell her?"

"I'm sure I don't know."

"I'll tell you," cried Mendel. "I'll tell you. To make himself interesting to her, because he is not interesting. He is nothing. And I will tell you something more. He has been telling her things about me to excuse himself. Now, hasn't he? . . . I can see by your face that he has." Clowes could not deny it, and she found it hard to conceal her distress. She was unused to intimate affairs being dragged out into the open like this, and her modesty was shocked. She had a pretty, intelligent face, and she looked for the moment like a startled hare, the more so when she put her handkerchief up to her nose with a gesture like that of a hare brushing its whiskers.

"Very well, then," Mendel continued; "you can tell her you have seen me, and you can tell her that I shall come to explain myself. I hide nothing, for I am ashamed of nothing that I do. I have no need to excuse myself. I am not a gentleman one moment and a cad the next. And you can tell Morrison that if I see her with Mitchell again I shall knock him down."

"Do please drink your tea," said Clowes. "It is getting cold."

Mendel gulped down his tea and hastened to add:—

"I am not boasting. He is bigger than I am, but I know something about boxing. My brother was nearly a prizefighter."

Clowes began to recover from her alarm, and his immense seriousness struck her as very comic.

"Did you know that Greta has cut her hair short?"

"Her hair?" cried Mendel. "Her beautiful hair?"

"Yes. She looks so sweet, but the boys call after her in the streets. All the girls are wild to do it."

"Her hair? Her beautiful hair? Why?"

"Oh! she got sick of putting it up. She is like that. She suddenly does something you don't expect."

"But she must look terrible!"

"Oh, no. She looks too sweet. And if all the boys at the Detmold wear their hair long, I don't see why the girls shouldn't wear theirs short."

"My mother had her head shaved when she married," said he, "and she wore a wig."

"Why did she do that?"

"It is the custom. The woman shows that she belongs wholly to her husband and makes herself unattractive to all other men."

"What a horrible idea!"

"It is a beautiful idea. It is the idea of love independent of everything else. That is why I thought Morrison must have some reason for cutting her hair."

"When you know Greta, you will know that she doesn't wait for reasons."

"Why does she like Mitchell?"

"She likes nearly everybody."

"But she writes to him."

"Of course she does," said Clowes, rather bored with his persistence.

"But she doesn't write to me."

"You don't write to her. You can't expect her to fall at your feet."

As she said this Clowes realised his extraordinary Orientalism. She could see him holding up his finger and expecting a woman to come at his bidding, and for a moment she was repelled by him. But she was a kind-hearted creature and felt very sorry for him, for he seemed so utterly at sea and was obviously full of genuine and painful emotion.

He detected her repulsion at once and perceived the effort she made to conquer it, and was at once grateful to her, for, as a rule, when that happened, people let it swamp everything else.

She said:—

"I'll tell Greta what you have said to me, and I am sure she will be very sorry to have hurt you."

"I only want her to come and sit for her portrait. It is very important to me, because I want to try new subjects and there is some lovely drawing in her face."

"But you mustn't knock Mitchell down. He is quite a nice boy, really, only a little wild."

"He is rotten," said Mendel dogmatically.

He felt better, and until dinner-time he prowled about Tottenham Court Road and Soho, a region of London that he particularly loved—a vibrant, nondescript region where innumerable streams of vitality met and fused, or clashed together to make a froth and a spume. It was like himself, chaotic and rawly alive, compounded of elements that knew no tradition or had escaped from it. He felt at home in it, and elated because he was also conscious of being superior to it, yet without the dizzy sense of superiority that assailed him among his own people, while he was never shocked and humiliated, as he was sometimes in sedate and prosperous London, by being made suddenly to realise his external inferiority. He loved the shop-girls hurrying excitedly from their work to their pleasure, and he sometimes spoke to them in their own slang, sometimes went home with them. . . . They always liked him because he never wasted time over silly flirtatious jokes or pretended to be in love with them. His interest and curiosity, like theirs, were purely physical, and his passion gave them a delicious sense of danger.

Logan was waiting for him at the Pot-au-Feu. There was no one else in the restaurant but the goggle-eyed man in his corner. Logan was sitting Napoleonically with his arms on the table and his chin sunk on his chest, with his lips compressed.

He nodded, but did not get up.

"Sorry if I'm late," said Mendel. "I went for a walk. I couldn't work to-day. My sister-in-law's sofa—I feel as if I had been beaten all over."

"That's the walk home," said Logan. "I'm used to it. The hours I've spent walking about this infernal London! I've slept on the Embankment, you know."

"No?"

"Yes. I've been as far down as that, though I'm not the sort of man who can be kept down. Did you know that Napoleon was out-at-elbows for a whole year?"

"No; I don't know much about Napoleon."

"Ah! You should. I read every book about him I can lay hands on. Gustave!"

The waiter came up and Logan ordered a very special dinner with the air of knowing the very inmost secrets of the establishment. He demanded orange bitters before the meal and a special brand of cigarette.

"My day hasn't been wasted," he said. "I've been to Cluny's and I asked to see your stuff. The little man there looked astonished, but I told him people were talking of no one else but you, and quite rightly. I talked to him from the dealer's point of view, and assured him that there was a big boom in pictures coming, and that he had better be prepared for it with a handful of new men. I didn't let him know that I was a painter, but I got him quite excited, and I did not leave him until he had hung a picture and two drawings."

"Which picture?"

"The one of your mother's kitchen. It is one of your best. To-morrow three men will walk into Cluny's and they will admire your work. On the day after to-morrow a real buyer will walk in."

Mendel's eyes grew larger and larger. Was Logan a magician, that he could direct human beings into Cluny's shop and conduct them straight to his work?

Logan laughed at his amazement.

"Lord love-a-duck!" he said, "you're not going to sit still and wait for commercial fools to discover that you know your job. At my first exhibition in Liverpool I put on a false beard and went in and bought one of my own pictures, just to encourage the dealer and the timid idiots who were too shy to go and ask him the price of the drawings. It worked, and this is going to work too. When I've warmed Cluny up into selling you, then I'm going to make him sell me. If you don't mind we'll have our names bracketed,—Kühler and Logan. People will believe in two men when they won't in one. As for three, you've only got to look at the Trinity to see what they'll believe when they get three working together. . . . Oh! I forgot you were a Jew and brought up to believe in One is One and all alone."

He laughed and gave a fat chuckle as he mimicked the little man in Cluny's cocking his head on one side and pretending to take in the beauties of Mendel's work as they were pointed out to him.

"I have enjoyed myself," said Logan. "By God! I wish there were a revolution. I'd have my finger in the pie. Oh! what lovely legs there'd be to pull—all the world's and his wife's as well. But it won't come in my time."

Under Logan's influence Mendel began to enjoy his food, which he had always treated as a tiresome necessity before. He sat back in his chair and sipped his wine and crumbled up his bread exactly as Logan did; and he had a delicious sense of leisure and well-being, as though nothing mattered very much. And, indeed, when he came to think of it, nothing did matter. He had years and years ahead of him, and here was good solid pleasure in front of him, so that he had only to dip his hands in it and take and take. . . .

After the dinner Logan ordered cigars, coffee, and liqueurs, and Mendel felt very lordly. The restaurant had filled up, and among the rest were Mitchell and Morrison.

Mendell turned, gave them a curt nod, and could not restrain a grin of satisfaction as he thought that score was settled. He leaned forward and gave himself up to the pleasure of Logan's talk.

"What I contend," said Logan, "is this—and mind you, I let off my youthful gas years ago. I've been earning my living since I was fourteen, so I know a little of what the world's like. I've been in offices and shops, and on the land, in hotels, on the railway, on the road as a bagman, from house to house as a tallyman, and I know what I'm talking about. The artist is a free man, and therefore an outlaw, because the world is full of timid slaves who lie in the laps of women. If an artist is not a free man, then he is not an artist. And I say that if the artist is outlawed, then he must use any and every means to get out of the world what it denies him. One must live."

"That's true," said Mendel.

"You may take it from me that there is less room in the world now for artists than ever there was. In the old days you chose your patron and he provided for you, as the Pope provided for Michael Angelo, and you devoted your art to whatever your patron stood for, spiritual power if he happened to be a pope, secular power if he happened to be a duke or a king. But, nowadays, suppose you had a patron—say, Sir Julius Fleischmann—and he kept you alive, what on earth could you devote your art to? You could paint his portrait, and his wife's portrait, and all his daughters' portraits, but they'd mean nothing; they'd just be vulgar men and women. No. Art is a bigger thing than any power left on the earth. Money has eaten up all the other powers, and only art is left uncorrupted by it. Art cannot be patronised. It cannot serve religion, because there is no religion vital enough to contain the spirit of art. There is nothing left in the world worthy of such noble service, and therefore art must be independent and artists must be free, because there is no honourable service open to them. They must have their own values, and they must have the courage of them. The world's values are the values fit for the service of Sir Julius Fleischmann, but they are not fit for men whose blood is stirring with life, whose minds are eager and active, men who will accept any outward humiliation rather than the degradation of the loss of their freedom."

"I met Sir Julius Fleischmann once," Mendel said. "He subscribed for me when I went to my first School of Art. They wanted to send me to Italy, but I refused, because I knew my place was here in London. There's more art for me in the Tottenham Court Road than in all the blue skies in the world."

"Quite right, too!" cried Logan. "That shows how sound an artist's instinct is. He knows what is good for him because he is a free man. The others have to be told what is good for them because they don't know themselves and because, however unhappy they are, they don't know the way out. When you and I are unhappy we know that it is because we have lost touch with life, or because we have lost touch with art; either the flesh or the spirit is choked with thorns, and we set about plucking them out. When it is a question of saving your soul, what do morals matter?"

Mendel had heard people talk about morals, and he knew that his own were supposed to be bad; but he was not certain what they were. Rather timidly he asked Logan, who gave his fat chuckle and replied:—

"Morals, my son? No one knows. They change about a hundred years after human practice. They are different in different times, places, and circumstances, and Sir Julius Fleischmann, like you and me, has none, because he can afford to do without them. . . . Well, I've done a good day's work and we've had a good dinner, and I must get back to my beautiful bed—unless you'd like to go to a music-hall."

Mendel was loath to let his friend go, and, weary though he was, he said he would like the music-hall. Logan bought more cigars and they walked round to the Oxford and spent the evening in uneasy and flat conversation with two ladies of the town, one of whom said she knew Logan, though he swore he had never seen her before. When they were shaken off, he told Mendel mysteriously that she was a friend of a woman of whom he went in terror, who had been pursuing him for a couple of years.

"Terrible! Terrible!" he said. "Like a wild beast. They're awful, these prostitutes, when they fall in love. It eats them up, body and soul."

And he went on talking of women, and from what he said it appeared that he was beset by them. He described them lurking in the street for him, forcing their way into the studio, clamouring for love, love, love.

"It makes me sick," he said. "I never yet met a woman who knew how to love. If a man has an enthusiasm for anything outside themselves, they plot and scheme with their damnable cunning to kill it. They want the carcase of a man, not the lovely life in it. And if they're decent they want babies, which is almost worse if you're hard up. No, boy; for God's sake don't take women seriously. If you can't do without them, hate 'em. They'll lick your boots for it. They feed on hatred, and will take it out of your hand."

He talked in this strain until they reached the Tube station in Piccadilly Circus. It was unusually empty, and by the booking-office was standing a very pretty girl, big and upstanding. She had a wide mouth and curious slanting eyes, plump cheeks and a roguish tilt to her chin.

She was well and neatly dressed, and Mendel judged her to be a shop-girl.

"That's a fine lass," said Logan. "Good-night, boy. I'll see you to-morrow and tell you about Cluny's."

"Good-night," said Mendel, still loath to see his friend go, and he suffered a pang of jealousy as he saw Logan go up to the girl, raise his hat, and speak to her. She started, blushed, and smiled. They stopped and talked together for a few moments, and then moved over towards the lift.

Mendel waited and watched them, Logan talking gaily, the girl smiling and watching him intently through her smile. With her eyes she took possession of him, and Mendel was filled with misgiving when he heard Logan's fat chuckle and the rustle and clatter of the gate as the lift descended. It reminded him oddly of the Demon King and the Fairy Queen in a pantomime he had once seen with Artie Beech, whose father used to get tickets for the gallery because he had play-bills in his shop window.

CHAPTER IV

BURNHAM BEECHES

FOR Greta Morrison as for Mendel, London life had been opened up through Mitchell. He had been friendly and kind to her when everybody else had been harsh, fault-finding, and indifferent. Her first year and a half at the hostel had been a period of misery, for the girls and women there regarded her as odd, vague, and careless, and thought it their duty to impose on her the discipline she seemed to need, for they knew nothing of her suffering through her ambition and her work.

Like Mendel, she had been overwhelmed by her inability to adapt herself easily to the Detmold standard of drawing, for it was against her temperament and her habit of mind to be precise, and drawing had always been to her rather a trivial thing, though extremely pleasant for the purposes of the caricatures in which her teasing humour found an outlet. All her girlhood had been thrillingly happy in the execution of large allegorical designs, through which she sought to express her delight in the earth—the immense serene power of which she became profoundly aware as she lay in the bracken at home and gazed out over the rich valley or up into the marvellous, quivering blue sky, through which she felt that she was being borne without a sound, without a tremor, irresistibly. Nothing could shake that loving knowledge in her, and it hurt her that her mother's cold, self-centred religion, which made her demand a fussy, sentimental attention from her children, forbade all expression of it in her daily life. Her brothers, revolting against the sentimentality exacted of them, treated all tenderness as ignoble rubbish, and in her rough-and-tumble with them Greta was hardened and forcd into independence. She had to play their games with them and to suffer the same tortures of knuckle-drill, brush, dry-shave, and wrist-screw. But all their swagger seemed to her rather fraudulent; and because they laughed at her allegorical designs she decided that men were inferior beings. When they laughed at her designs it was to her as though they laughed at the beauty she had tried to express in them, and the sacrilege enraged her more than her mother's petulance, for they were young and strong and full of life, and they should not have been blind. It was against them that she first found relief in caricature, and as they went through their Public Schools and were more and more compressed into type, she pilloried them, and, as a consequence, even when she was a young woman, big and fine, with the tender, delicate bloom of seventeen upon her, she had to submit to the indignity of knuckle-drill, brush, dry-shave, and wrist-screw.

She was filled with a horror of men, and especially Public School men, for they seemed to her entirely lacking in decency, humility, and honesty. They pretended to be so fine and ignored everything that was finer than themselves. Her brothers' foolish love-affairs disgusted her and made her suppress in herself every emotion that tried to find its way to a good-looking boy or young man. She was not shy of them or afraid of them, but she would not encourage in them what she so detested in her brothers.

During her first year in London she devoted herself heart and soul to her work. There were two or three families who were kind to her as her mother's daughter, but their ways were her mother's, and she only visited them as a duty, and to break the monotony of the school and the hostel.

Her encounter with Mitchell took place at the time when Mendel's influence on him had set him in revolt against his Public School training. On the other hand, the sight of the abyss of poverty into which Mendel descended so easily had set him reeling. He was shrewd enough to know that Hetty Finch was using him as a ladder to get out of it, and that there was a real danger of her kicking him down into it. In a state of horrible confusion he plunged at the most obvious outlet, the "pure girl" of the tradition of his upbringing.

He made no concealment of it, but turned to Morrison with a childlike confidence that touched her. She was feeling lonely, disappointed, and dissatisfied with herself and was glad of his company. It was a change from the woman-ridden atmosphere of the hostel.

By way of making their relationship seemly he introduced her to his family, where as the pure young girl who was to save their hope from wild courses she was a great success.

"First sensible thing you've done, my boy," said Mr. Mitchell, that great man, a journalist who had been a correspondent in a dozen wars. "A pure friendship between a boy and a girl has a most ennobling influence—most ennobling."

"She is truly spiritual," sighed Mrs. Mitchell, "the type who justifies the independence of the modern girl, whatever the Prime Minister may say."

"That scoundrel!" cried Mr. Mitchell. "That infamous buffoon who has not a grain of Liberalism left in his toadying mind!"

"My dear," said Mrs. Mitchell, "we were talking about little Miss Morrison."

"Well," answered Mr. Mitchell, "we took our risk when we let the boy be an artist and we can be thankful it is no worse. Did I tell you, my love, that I am going off to the Cocos Islands to-morrow?"

"Indeed, my dear? Then you will not be able to come to my meeting."

"No. I hear it is worse than the Congo."

"Oh dear! oh dear! I don't know what the world is coming to. The more civilised we get in one part of the world, the worse things are in another part. I declare such horrible things seem to me to make it quite unimportant whether we get the vote or not."

"When you have a Tory Government calling itself Liberal," said Mr. Mitchell very angrily, "it means that neither reform at home nor justice abroad can receive any attention. The country has gone to the dogs, and I thank God I spend most of my time out of it."

"And poor Humphrey suffers. I'm sure I am a good mother to him, but I cannot be a father as well. I'm thankful to say he seems to be dropping that Jewish friend of his. He is a genius, of course, and quite remarkable, considering what he comes from; but with Jews it can never be the same, can it?"

"No, my love," said Mr. Mitchell; "one would never dream of drinking out of the same glass, would one? Still, I must say, the Jews in England are much better than they are anywhere else, which seems to show that they can respond to decent treatment and thrive in the air of liberty."

Both Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell had a platform manner of speaking, and as Morrison was not a subject that suited it, she was soon dropped; but in the end they came back to her, and agreed that she was a nice, shy little girl, and that she had no idea of marrying their only son, or any one else, for that matter.

She was much impressed with them, for she had never met important people before, and she was given to understand that they were very important. They seemed to have their fingers on innumerable reforms which were only suppressed by the stupidity of the Government. Directly the Government was removed, as of course such idiots soon would be, Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell would raise their fingers and, hey presto! women would have votes, the slums would be pulled down, maternity would be endowed, prostitutes would be saved, prisons would be reformed, capital punishment abolished, the working classes would be properly housed, every able-bodied man who wished it should have his small holding, the railways would be nationalised, site values would be taxed, divorce would be made easy and free from social taint, and education would be made scientific and thorough. In the meantime, as the Government did not budge, Mr. Mitchell went to the Cocos Islands and Constantinople to procure evidence of horrors abroad and Mrs. Mitchell addressed meetings on the subject of horrors at home.

Morrison was impressed. The contrast between these people who thought of everything and everybody but themselves and her own home, where nothing was thought of but the family, the Church, and the Empire, shocked her into thinking and gave her a sense of liberation. It made human beings more interesting than she had thought, and she began to see that they did not, as she had heedlessly accepted that they did, fit infallibly into their places, and that vast numbers had no places to fit into. She herself, she saw, did not fit into any place, and that she had been squeezed, like paint out of a tube, out of her home for no other reason than that she was a woman, and there was only just enough money to establish the boys. However, she could not quite swallow Mrs. Mitchell's view that men had deliberately, coldly, and of set purpose ousted women from their rightful share in the sweets of life.

She had a period of despair as these revelations sank into her mind and she had to digest Mrs. Mitchell's awful facts and statistics about the night-life of London. Life seemed too terrible for her powers, but, as she soon began to see how comic Mrs. Mitchell was, she pulled herself together and found that she was strengthened by the experience, and when Mitchell confessed the awful doings of his past, she felt immeasurably older than he, and was thankful she was a woman and did not expect such things of herself. For she could never quite take his word for all he said. She knew her brothers too well to accept his plea of passionate necessity.

"Gawd!" he used to say. "When I think of my past I feel that I must go on my knees and worship your purity."

His absurdity made her blush, but she liked him. He was clever and had read much under his father's guidance, poetry and modern English fiction mostly, and when she went to tea with him in his studio he used to read aloud to her, Keats and Shelley and Matthew Arnold.

"I think I only like poetry," she said once, "when it makes pictures. When it doesn't do that it seems to me just words, and it doesn't seem to matter how nice they sound."

"Gawd!" he said. "That's like Kühler. He says nothing makes such pictures as the Bible, and he is always quoting that about: 'At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down: where he fell, there he lay down.' And he says it must be the words, because his own Hebrew Bible never gave him anything like the same—er—vision of it."

Once he had begun to talk of Mendel she would not let him leave the subject.

"Do you think he's a genius?" she would ask.

"Gawd! I don't know. He says he is a genius, and I suppose time will show whether it is true or not. But why do you want to talk of him?"

"I don't know. I'm interested. Perhaps because he is different."

"Well, you've had tea with him. That is about as much as is good for you. If you were my sister I wouldn't let you know him."

"Why not?"

"My dear girl, there are certain things in life that a young girl ought never to know."

"What things? Is there anything worse than what your mother talks about at her meetings? Girls know all about that nowadays, and it is no good pretending we don't."

"Talking about them is one thing, coming in contact with them is another. Kühler is a Jew, and he comes from the East End, where they don't have any decent pleasures. He's infernally good-looking in a hurdy-gurdy sort of way. Gawd! Women look at him and off they go."

"But he cares for poetry and the Bible and he loves pictures. . . ."

"It doesn't seem to make any difference."

During this talk he had begun to find Morrison extraordinarily pretty and lovable, and he said tenderly:—

"Won't you take off your hat and let me see your beautiful hair?"

She refused, and asked him more about Mendel, and in exasperation at the unintended snub he told her the true story of Hetty Finch, not concealing his own share in it, but implying that Mendel's terrible immorality had corrupted him and led to his downfall.

The story was received in silence.

At last she said:—

"And what is going to become of Hetty Finch?"

"That's the extraordinary part of it," said Mitchell. "She has found some one to marry her."

He leaned against the mantelpiece and dropped his head in his hands and groaned.

"Gawd!" he said. "If it weren't for you I don't know what would become of me." And he was so moved by his own thoughts that tears trickled down his nose and made dark spots on the whitened hearth.

"I can't ask you to marry me," he said mournfully. "I'm unworthy, but I want to be your friend."

She made no reply, and he was forced to ask rather lamely:—

"Will you be my friend?"

"Of course."

"Always?"

"How can I promise that?" she said.

It was then that he took her to the Paris Café, where, all in a turmoil through her new knowledge of men and women, she hardly knew what she was doing, and gave Mendel the curt nod which had so disgruntled him.

Every summer the Detmold students went for a picnic, either up the river, or to a Surrey common, or to one of the forests in the vicinity of London. This year Burnham Beeches was chosen. Two charabancs met the party at Slough, and though Mendel tried very hard to sit next to Morrison, he was outmanœuvred by Mitchell, and had to put up with Clowes.

"I wish you wouldn't glare at Mitchell so. You make me quite uncomfortable," said she.

"He is telling her lies about me," growled Mendel.

"Don't be absurd," protested Clowes. "He is not talking about you at all." She felt rather cross with him because he was spoiling her pleasure, and because she had wanted to sit next to some one else, and she added: "People aren't always talking about you, and if anybody does it's the models, and that's your own fault."

"How beastly!" he said.

"I don't blame them. They haven't any other interest."

"I didn't mean that. I meant this country. It is so flat and dull, regular railway scenery. What a place to choose for a picnic!"

"Wait until you get to the woods! We're going to a place called Egypt. Don't you think that's romantic? Though it reminds me more of Oberon and Titania than of Anthony and Cleopatra."

He looked blank, and she explained:—

"Shakespeare, you know."

"I've never read Shakespeare."

"Oh! you should."

"I've tried, but I can't understand him. I suppose it's because I'm not English. It seems ridiculous to me, all those plots and murders."

"But the fairies in the 'Midsummer Night's Dream'!"

"I haven't read it; but what do you want with fairies? A wood's a wood, and there's quite enough mystery in it for me without pretending to see things that aren't there."

"But it's nice to pretend," said Clowes rather lamely, almost hating him because he seemed so wrong in the country. She knew people like that, people she was quite fond of in London, but in the country they were awful.

The charabancs swung through Farnham Royal and they came in sight of the woods, brilliant under a vivid blue sky patched with huge, heavy white clouds. Birds hovered above the trees, and as they turned out of the street of seaside bungalows and along the sandy lane leading to Egypt, they put up rabbits and pheasants.

The art students looked bizarre and almost theatrical in the woods, with the long-haired young men and the short-haired girls, many of them wearing the brightest colours. Mendel hated the lot of them, giggling girls and bouncing boys, and he recognised how inappropriate they all were and how he himself was the most inappropriate of them all. He felt ashamed, and wanted to go away and hide, to crawl away to some hole and gaze with his eyes at the beauty he could not feel. There were too many trees, as there were too many people. . . . What a poor thing is a man in a crowd which makes it impossible to share his thoughts and emotions with any one! And how bitter it is when he is full of thoughts and emotions! It is all so bitter that the crowd must do foolish, inappropriate things not to feel it, not to be broken up by it. . . . Yet the others seemed happy enough. The old Professors were beaming and pretending to be young. Perhaps they enjoyed it more than any one because they did not want to be alone, or to steal away with a coveted maid, as some of the young men were doing even now. . . . Had Mitchell stolen away with Morrison? Horrible idea! No. There he was, putting up stumps for cricket.

Cricket! How Mendel loathed that fatuous game, the kind of inappropriate foolish thing the crowd always did! How he dreaded the swift hard ball that would hurt his hand or his shins! How humiliated he felt when he was out: and how he raged against the frantic excitement he could not help feeling when he hit the ball and made a run. One run seemed to him a larger score than any one else could possibly make, and when he made a run and was on the winning side he always felt that he had won the match. In the field, no matter where he was placed, he went and stood by the umpire, because he had noticed that the ball rarely went that way.

He had to field now, and he went and stood by the umpire. Mitchell came swaggering in. He hit a lovely four, a three, a two. The fielders changed at the over, but Mendel stayed where he was. The ball came near him. He picked it up and threw it as hard as he could at Mitchell's head. Fortunately he missed, and there was a roar of laughter.

"I say, I mean to say," said one of the Professors, "we are not playing rounders or—or baseball."

And there was more laughter.

Mitchell hit a three, a two, a lost ball (six), a four, and then he skied one. The ball went soaring up. With his keen sight Mendel could see it clearly shining red against the hot sky. With an awful sinking in his stomach he realised that it was coming down near him. It was coming straight to him. It would fall on him, hurt him, stun him. Then he thought that if he caught it Mitchell would be out. He never lost sight of the ball for a moment. If he caught it Mitchell would be out.

He moved back two paces, opened his hands, and the ball fell into them.

"Oh! well caught, indeed! Well caught!"

Mitchell walked away from the wicket swinging his bat in a deprecating fashion. After all, one does not expect miracles even in cricket.

"Beautiful, beautiful ball!" thought Mendel, fondling it with his still tingling hands. "You came to me like a lark to its nest, and you shone so red against the sky, you shone so red, so red!"

His dissatisfaction vanished. The crowd was a nice beast after all. It was at his feet. At no one else had it shouted like that. . . . The woods were very beautiful, with the bracken nodding under the trees, and the branches swaying, and the soft winds murmuring through the leaves, through which the trees seemed to breathe and sigh and to envy the moving wind while they were condemned to stay and grow old in one spot. Very, very sweet were the green and yellow and blue lights hovering and swinging through the woods, dappling the trunks of the trees, weaving an ever-changing pattern on the carpet of moss and dead leaves, and the tufted bracken that sometimes almost looked like the sea, full of a life of its own. Surely, surely there were fish swimming in the bracken.

Starting out of his dreams, he saw Morrison at the wicket, very intent, with a stern expression on her face. He knew she was desperately anxious to score.

She was most palpably stumped with her second ball, but the umpire gave her "not out," amid general applause, for she was a favourite.

She lashed out awkwardly at the next ball, which came on the leg side. It came towards Mendel at an incredible speed. He put his foot on it, picked it up, pretended it had passed him, and tore towards the trees in simulated pursuit; and he remained looking for it in the bracken while Morrison ran four, five, six, seven, eight, and just as some one cried "Lost ball!" he stooped, pretended to pick it up, and threw it back to the bowler.

He himself was bowled first ball, but, as it turned out, Morrison's side won by three runs.

She was bubbling over with happiness, and after tea she came over to him and said:—

"I say, Kühler, that *was* a good catch."

He folded his arms and cocked his chin and looked down his nose as he said:—

"Oh! yes. I can play cricket."

"You made a blob," she said with a grin.

"A catch like that," he answered, "is enough for one day. I have seen many words written in the papers about a catch like that. Even Calthrop does not have so many words written about his pictures."

"I shall hate to go back to London after this," she said. "I didn't know there was anything so beautiful near London."

"There is Hampstead," he said.

"I've never been there," she replied.

"Will you let me take you to Hampstead? It has lilies and water."

"Oh yes," she said eagerly. "Do let us go into the woods now before we start. I'm sure there must be lovely places."

He followed her, first looking round to see what had become of Mitchell, whom he saw standing with a scowl on his face, a foolish figure.

"Don't talk!" said Morrison. "I'm sure it is lovely through here."

She led the way through a grove of pines into a beech glade, at the end of which they found a dingle, where they stood and gazed back.

"Oh, look!" she cried. "Look at the pine stems through the sea-green of the beeches. Purple they are, and don't they swing?"

"I like the wind in the trees," said Mendel.

He saw that there were tears in her eyes, and he caught some of her ecstasy. But he could not understand it at all and it hurt him horribly. She was wonderful and beautiful to him, the very heart of all that loveliness, the song of it, its music and its mystery.

"She is only a little girl," he said to himself very clearly, stamping out the words in his mind so that it was as though some one else had spoken to him.

The ecstasy grew in her, and with it the pain in him. She swayed towards him and fell against his breast and raised her lips to him. He stooped and almost in terror just touched them with his.

He was a sorry prince for a sleeping beauty, for he was afraid lest she should awake.

CHAPTER V

HAPPY HAMPSTEAD

ON the morning of the day fixed for their expedition to Hampstead Heath she sent him roses—yellow roses. He took them across to his mother and gave them to her, saying:—

"I do not need flowers. I am happy."

Golda laughed at him, and said:—

"You are a big little man since you made the catch at the cricket."

"I don't know what it is, but I am happy. It is no longer surprising to me that there are happy people in the world, and I think the Christians are not all such fools to wish to be happy. I am only astonished that they are happy with such little things."

"It is nothing," said Golda. "They are not truly happy; they are only hiding away from themselves."

"But I am finding myself," cried Mendel. "I shall no more paint fishes and onions. I shall paint only what I feel, and it will be beautiful. I am so clever I can paint anything I choose."

"Go to your work now," said Golda. "You can boast as much as you please when the King has sent for you and told you you are the greatest artist in England. Go to your work."

He went back to his studio and there found a letter from Logan, giving his new address in Camden Town, and another from Mitchell, asking him why he was so unfriendly. This he answered at once:—

"You are no longer my friend. You have despised and injured me. Superior as I am to you, you have thought it your part as a gentleman to try to keep me in my place. You have treated me as a kind of animal. You cannot see that as an artist I am the equal of all men, the highest and the lowest. My own poor people I do not expect to know this, but of an educated man I do expect it. You cannot see this, and I count you lower than the lowest, and as such I am prepared to know you, and not otherwise. I have changed completely. I no longer believe in the Detmold or in Calthrop or in any of the things I reverenced as a student. I prefer the Academy, for it does not pretend to be advanced, and is honest though asleep. I am no longer a student. I am an artist. You will always be an art student, and so I say good-bye to you, as one says good-bye to friends on a station-platform. The train moves and all their affectionate memories and longings cannot stop it. The train moves and I am in it, and I say good-bye to you without even looking out of the window."

This done, he sat down to work at a portrait of his father and mother, with which he was designing to eclipse his first exhibiting success. It seemed to him important that it should be finished. Hearing Issy come in, he shouted to him to come and sit instead of his father, who had given out that he was unwell and was indulging in a sleeping bout.

Issy came shambling in, pale, tired, and unhappy. He sat as he was told, and said:—

"I wish Harry would come back; the business is being too much for me."

"Oh! I shall soon be rich and then I'll help you."

"There's not much help for me," said Issy. "I'm like father. There's always something against me to keep me down. It seems funny to me that people will give you so much money for something they don't really want."

"Come and look at it," said Mendel.

Issy obeyed.

"I don't think it's really like them. Why should anybody buy them who doesn't know them?"

He spoke so heavily and dully that Mendel found it hard to conceal his irritation. When Issy had gone back to his chair, he asked:—

"What do you live for, Issy?"

"Live?" said Issy, mystified.

"Yes. What do you like best in the world?"

"Playing cards. Playing cards. Every day there's work and every night there's Rosa, and on Saturday I play cards. Yes. I play cards; and, of course, you are always something to think about."

"What do you think about me?"

"Oh! You will be rich and famous, and you will be able to choose among all the girls with money. It is like having a play always going on in the family. But I would rather play cards, and Rosa is not so bad as you all say she is. I am not a good husband to her, for I have moods and I cannot talk to her, for I cannot talk to any one. What is there to say? She has her children, and she only wants more because she is a fool. It is not her fault."

"That'll do, Issy. I've got all I want. I can't get any more from you. Some day I'll teach you how to be happy."

"Oh!" said Issy, with a sly leer. "I know how to be happy. I can't see why any one should want to have father and mother hanging on their walls."

He slunk away.

How depressing he was! Poor old Issy! as much a part of the street as the doors and windows of the houses. He might move a hundred yards to another exactly similar street, but he would always be the same. It was not his fault. Mendel knew the depths of devotion of which his brother was capable. It was devotion to his mother that kept him living round the corner, devotion to his father that tied him to the unprofitable business. The name of Kühler had attained the dignity of a brass-plate on the front door, and he would die rather than see it removed, at any rate in his father's lifetime.

For the first time Mendel faced his circumstances squarely. With something of a shock he thought of the family arriving at Liverpool Street and never in all these years moving more than half a mile away from it, and that in this amazing London, with its trains and buses to take you from end to end of it in a little over an hour. His mother had never been west of the Bank. She did not even know where Piccadilly Circus was, or the Detmold, or the National Gallery, or the Paris Café, or Calthrop's studio, or any other important centre of life. Liverpool Street she knew, and outside Liverpool Street were the sea and Austria. . . . When there were no little happenings at home she would always fall back on Austria and the troubled days at the inn, and the soldiers who used to come in and ask to see the beautiful baby before they thought of ordering drinks, and her rich uncle who used to supply the barracks with potatoes and was so mean that he refused to give her any when she had not a penny in the world, and the neighbours who used to bring food so that the beautiful baby should not starve. . . . They stayed where they were, stormily passionate, yet with no sense of confinement, while he was drawn off into the swiftly moving whirligig of London, going from house to house, studio to studio, café to café, atmosphere to atmosphere, and all his passionate storms were spent upon nothing, were absorbed in the general movement, leaving him, tottering and dazed, in it, yet alien to it, discovering no soul in it all and losing the clear knowledge of his own.

Surely now that was ended. She had sent him the yellow roses, and he had given them to his mother to join the two whom he loved. They must have touched her face before they came to him, and Golda had buried her face in them.

Impatiently he awaited the time for him to go to the Detmold. He put on a clean collar and a black coat, but then he remembered how the old Jews whom he asked to sit for him always put on clean clothes and clipped their beards, under the impression that he wanted to photograph them. In his clean collar and black coat he felt as though he were going to the photographer's or to a wedding, and remembering how he had been dressed when he saw her for the first time on the stairs, he took out an old black shirt, a corduroy coat and trousers, and a red sash.

He could not bring himself to wear the red sash. It reminded him of Mitchell, who had been with him when he bought it.

It had been very hot. The walls and the pavements gave out a dry, stifling heat. The smell of the street outside came up in waves—a smell of women and babies, leather and kosher meat. He must wait for the cool weather, he thought, before he asked her to the studio again.

"She is only a little girl," he said to himself. "She is pretty, but she is only a little girl. I will tell her that she must not see Mitchell again, because he is not true. I will paint her portrait, and then I will not see her again, because she is only a little girl."

He sat in the window with the clock in front of him, and directly it said half-past four he clapped his hat on his head, seized the silver-knobbed stick which at that time was an indispensable part of an artist's apparel, and bolted as though he were late for a train.

She was waiting for him. He took off his hat, but in his nervousness he could not speak, and as he could not remember which side of a lady he ought to walk, he bewildered her by dodging from one side to the other with a quick, catlike tread, so that she did not hear him, and whenever she turned to speak to him he was not there.

"Wasn't it a good picnic!" she said enthusiastically. "It's the best picnic I've ever been to."

"They are usually pretty good," he said lamely. "I think we'd better go by bus."

They mounted a bus and sat silently side by side.

When they stopped by the Cobden statue he said:—

"A friend of mine has just taken a studio in Camden Town. His name is Logan."

"Was he at the Detmold?"

"No."

That settled Logan for her. She began to feel anxious. Was the afternoon going to be a failure? Why could she never, never get the better of her shyness? She wanted to make him happy because, on the whole, people had been beastly to him and said such horrid things about him. She wanted him to feel for himself, and not only through her, that the world was a very wonderful place, a place in which to be happy. He was so stiff and different, so taut and tightly strung up, that lounging, loose-limbed Mitchell seemed graceful compared with him. Yet there was something unforgettable about him, and he had always had for her the vivid romantic reality of the beautiful young men on the stage, who were creatures of a delicious, absurd world which she would never enter and never wished to enter: a world where young men opened their arms and young women sank into them and were provided with happiness for ever and ever. Her vigour rejected this world, for she knew and lived in a better, but all the same it had its charm and its curious reality. . . .

She was not shy because she had kissed him. That had passed with the shifting light through the trees and the clouds in the sky. It had been vivid and true for that moment, but it had perished and fallen away like a drop of water, like a rainbow.

He remembered it. As he sat by her side and could feel the warm life in her, it became terribly actual to him, the cool contact of her lips, and he was glad when the bus reached the yard with the painted swing-boats and he need no longer sit by her side. He had begun to feel subservient to her, and he would not have that. What Rosa was to Issy, what Golda was to his father, that should a woman be to him, for it was good and decent so. . . . He was almost sorry he had come. He was painfully shy, and knew that she was suffering under it.

He walked so fast that she was hard put to keep up with him, but she swung out and would not be beaten, and managed his pace without losing her breath. Over to the wooded side of the Heath he took her, and stopped under a chestnut-tree.

"Shall we sit down?" he said. "Or would you like to go on walking?"

"I'd like to sit down," she answered. "I love walking, but I can't talk at the same time."

He sat down at once, without waiting for her to choose a spot.

"This grass is nice and cool," he said.

It was wet, but he had no thought for her thin cotton frock.

She sat a couple of yards away from him on the short turf and plunged her arm into the long, cool grass. Then she lay on her stomach and plucked a blade of grass and chewed it.

"Thank you for sending me the roses. I gave them to my mother."

"I liked your mother."

"She liked you. She said: 'That is a good girl.' She is very quick at guessing what people are like."

"I'm glad she liked me."

Once again conversation died away, but she seemed content to lie there with her arms in the cool grass. Their round slenderness fascinated him. Her short hair hung over her face, so that he could only see the tip of her chin.

Suddenly he asked her:—

"Do you send flowers to Mitchell?"

"Yes," she said, and her head was lowered so that the tip of her chin was hidden by her hair.

He said nothing, but he too lay on the grass, flat on his stomach, with his head on his arms. His heart began to thump, and, though he tried to control it, it would not be still. Without raising his head he said, in a choking voice that astonished him:—

"My father fainted for love of my mother. When he heard her name he fainted away."

She said nothing, only in the long grass her fingers were still. Her white hands in the grass fascinated him, held his eyes transfixed, the green blades coming up through the white fingers that were so still. He stared at them as though they were some strange flower, and for him they had nothing to do with her at all. He drew himself near to them, never taking his eyes off them—white and green, white and green and pink at the finger-tips. He must touch them. They were cool, soft, and firm, soft as the petals of a rose.

He grasped them like a child seizing a pretty toy, but when they were in his grasp he was no longer like a child. A single impulse thrilled through all his body and made it strong even as a giant. With one easy swing of his arm he pulled her to him, held her with a vast tenderness, and held her so, gazing into her face. Her lips parted, and he kissed them. . . .

It was she who first found words:—

"Oh Mendel! I do love you."

He was amazed at his own strength, at his own tenderness. . . . So that was a kiss! And this, this, this was love! It was incredible! How sweet and easy were his emotions. He was as free and light as the wind in the leaves.

She had slipped from his arms, but she was singing through all his veins, she and no other, she and nothing else in the world. And he was in her, perfectly, beautifully aware of her body and of the ecstasy in it, of the tree above them, of the dove-coloured clouds, of the cool green grass, of the yellow earth crumbling out of the mound yonder, and of the ecstasy in them all.

So for many moments they lay in silence, until as suddenly as it had come his strength left him, and he broke into a passionate babble of words:—

"You must not send flowers to Mitchell, because he cannot love you and I can. He knows nothing, and I know a great deal. I know women and the ways of women, for many have loved me, but I have loved none but you. No woman has been my friend except my mother. I did not look for any woman to be like my mother. I am not an Englishman who can love with pretty words. I love, and it is like that tree, growing silently until it dies. It has stolen on me as softly as the night, and I sink into it as I sink into the night, to sleep. It is as though the dark night were suddenly filled with stars and all the stars had become flowers and poured their honey into my thoughts. When your white hands were in the grass they were like flowers and they seemed to belong to me, as all beautiful things belong to me because I can love them."

She came nearer to him and laid her hand on his, and she said:—

"I am very, very happy."

And she laughed and added:—

"I *was* glad when you made that catch."

He was beyond laughter. For him laughter was for trivial things. She had stopped the flow of his thoughts, the rush of his emotions up into his creative consciousness. Wave upon wave of passion surged through him, racked him, tortured him, tossing his soul this way and that, threatening to hurl it down and smash it on the hardness of his nature. He set his teeth and would not wince. If she could laugh she could know nothing of that. She was shallow, she was young. . . . Was it because he was a Jew that he seemed so old compared with her? . . . What was it she lacked that she could laugh and leave him to the torment she had provoked?

But she was aware of the curious blankness that had come over his end of their twilight silence, and she suffered from it, thinking: "Am I an awful woman? Can I give nothing?" And she turned to him to give, and give all the rare treasures of her soul, of her heart, to lay them before him for his delight. But what she had already given had let loose a storm in him that blotted out all the beauty of the scene, all the loveliness of their love, the gift and the taking of it, and left him with only the dim light of her purity.

Soon the storm passed and they had nothing but an easy delight in each other's company, each turning to each as to a warm fire by which to laugh and talk and make merry.

He told her stories of his childhood, of his brothers and his father, and Mr. Kuit, the thief, who had bought him his first suit; of his childish joy in painting, and there he stopped short. Of his misery he was unable to speak.

"You do believe in yourself," she said.

"Why not?" he replied; "I am a man. When I hold my hands before my eyes they are real. They are flesh and blood. I must believe in them. And I am all flesh and blood. I must believe."

"And everything else is real to you."

"Everything that I love is real. And what I do not love I hate, so that is real too."

They wandered about the Heath until night came and the stars shone, and then they plunged into the glitter of London, where all people and things were deliciously fantastic and comic, flat and kinematographic, as though, if you walked round to the other side, you would discover that they were painted on one side only. It gave them the glorious illusion of being the only two living people in the world, for they and only they had loved since the world began, and all the other lovers were only people in a story, living happily ever after or coming to an end of their love, neither of which could happen to them because they were, always had been, and always would be in love.

They dined at the Pot-au-Feu, where they encountered Mitchell, who had the effrontery to come and speak to them. He was very friendly and spoke as though nothing had happened. They told him they had been to Hampstead and recommended him to try it when he found London too stuffy.

When he had gone away, Morrison said:—

"I am going away soon."

"Going away? But you mustn't go away."

"I have to go next week. My mother has fits of anxiety about my being in London every now and then, and she drags me off home. She has got one of them now. She can't see that if any harm were going to happen to me it would have happened during my first year, when I didn't know anything and was very lonely. I don't think I'm very real to her, somehow."

She gave a little shiver of distaste at the thought of going home.

"But you mustn't go away," said Mendel. "I want you, always."

"And I want to be with you, but if I refused to go home now, I should have to go for always, for I should have no money."

He was plunged into a dejected silence, and with hardly a word more he took her home.

They had a whole week of this warm happiness. He abandoned every other thought, every other pursuit, every other friend. He put aside his work to paint her portrait, and she came every day to his studio. At night he hardly slept at all for his longing for the next day to come and bring her to his studio, that now seemed immense, airy, ample even for such a giant as he felt. . . . He adored her even when she laughed, even when she teased him. He even learned occasionally to laugh at himself. It was worth it to see the amazing happiness he gave her.

One morning as he was painting her, he said:—

"I can't believe you are going away."

"It is true, more's the pity."

"But you are not going, for I will marry you."

He said this in a matter-of-fact tone as he went on with his painting. The picture was coming on well and he was pleased with it. He stepped back and looked at it from different angles. It seemed a long time before she made the expected matter-of-fact reply, and he looked up at her. She was hanging her head and plucking at her skirt nervously. She heard him stop in his work, and she replied:—

"I don't . . . think . . . I want to marry you, Mendel. I don't . . . think . . . I want to marry anybody."

"I'm making plenty of money and I can get commissions for portraits. I could make it up with Birnbaum. We could go to Italy together."

"Don't make it harder for both of us, Mendel. . . . I don't want . . . to marry."

"You will go back home, then?"

"Please . . . please . . ." she implored him.

A fury began to rise in him. He stamped his foot on the ground and struck his brush across the picture. He made a tremendous effort to recover himself, but before he could say another word she had slipped through the door and was gone. He darted after her, and reached the front-door just in time to see her running as hard as she could down the street and round the corner.

Just as he was, in his shirt-sleeves, hatless and collarless, he went in to see his mother. He was white-hot with rage, and he walked up to her and looked her up and down as though he were trying to persuade himself that she was to blame.

"What do you think the news is now?"

Golda put her hand to her heart and looked at him fearfully as she shook her head.

"I've been refused," he said, "refused by the Christian girl."

"Refused!" cried Golda, who had never heard of such a thing as a girl refusing to marry a rich young man.

"Yes. I proposed to her and she refused."

"The Christians are all alike," said Golda. "They keep themselves to themselves, and you must do the same."

She took a smoked herring from the cupboard and cut it into portions.

"And when your time for marrying comes you must look among the Jews, for the Jews are good people. No Jewish girl would serve you a trick like that. Jewish girls know that they must marry and they are good. But she is young, and you are young, and you will both forget."

CHAPTER VI

CAMDEN TOWN

FROM the magnificent studio in Hammersmith to two rooms in Camden Town Mr. James Logan removed his worldly goods, a paint-box, half-a-dozen canvases, two pairs of trousers, three shirts, a "Life of Napoleon" in two volumes, and a number of photographs of famous pictures. The magnificent studio had been lent to him by the mistress of its owner, who had returned unexpectedly from abroad, and Mr. James Logan's departure from it was hurried, but unperturbed.

"In my time," he said, "I have kept Fortune busy, but her tricks leave me unmoved. She will get tired of it some day and leave me alone."

All the same he did not relish the change. He was nearly thirty and had tasted sufficient comfort to relish it and to prize it. Also he could not forget the ambitions with which he had come to London five years before. In the North he had won success by storm, and he could not understand any other tactics. He was an extraordinary man and expected immediate recognition of the fact. Upon his own mind his personality had so powerful an effect that he was blind to the fact that it did not have a similar effect upon the minds of others. Women and young men he could always stir into admiration, but men older than himself were only affronted. He knew it and used to curse them:—

"These clods, these hods, these glue-faced ticks have no more sap in them than a withered tree. They hate me as a mule hates a stallion, and for the same reason. May God and Mary have mercy on what little is left of their souls by the time they come to judgment!"

He cursed them now as he laid his trousers on the vast new double-bed he had bought and went into his front room to arrange his easel and canvas for work. Whatever happened to him he would go on painting, because he saw himself like that, standing as firm as a rock before his easel, painting, while the world, for all he cared, went to rack and ruin. What else could happen to a world that refused to recognise its artists?

Painting was truly a joy to him. He loved the actual dabbling with the colours, laying them out on his palette, mixing them, evolving rare shades; he loved the fiery concentration and absorption in the making of a picture; the renewed power of sight when he turned from a picture to the world; the glorious nervous energy that came thrilling through his fingers in moments of concentration; the feeling of the superiority of this power to all others in the world. And so, whatever happened, he turned to his easel and painted. Love, debt, passion, quarrels, all the disturbances of life came and went, but painting remained, inexhaustible. So he had been happy, free, unfettered, gay, avoiding all responsibility because it was his formula that the artist's only responsibility is to his art.

He was doubly happy now because he knew he had made an impression on a young man whose sincerity and vigour of purpose he could not but respect. He was himself singularly impressionable, and like a sponge for sucking up the colour of any strong personality. And Mendel had the further attraction for him that he was pure London, of the shifting, motley London that Logan, as a provincial, adored. This London he had touched at many points, but never through a strong living soul that had, and most loyally acknowledged, London as its home.

Logan's visit to Mendel in the East End had been one of the great events of his life. Through it he had found his feet where he had been floundering, though, of course, happily and excitedly enough.

He told himself that now he was going to settle down to work, to the great productive period of his life, such as was vouchsafed to every real artist who was tough enough to pay for it in suffering. He would rescue Mendel's genius from the Detmold and the ossified advanced painters, and together they would smash the English habit of following French art a generation late, and they would lay the foundations of a genuine English art, a metropolitan art, an art that grew naturally out of the life of the central city of the world.

Logan always worked by programme, but hitherto he had changed his programme once a week. Now he was sure that this was the programme of his life. It would be amended, of course, by inspiration, but its groundwork was permanent. He was enthusiastic over it. . . . Of course, this was what he had always been seeking, and hitherto he had been fighting the London which absorbed the talents of the country, masticated them, digested them, and evacuated them in the shape of successful painters for whom neither life nor art had any meaning, or in the shape of vicious wrecks who crawled from public-house to public-house and died in hospitals.

It was time that was stopped. It was time for London to be made to recognise that it had a soul, and this generation must begin the task, for never before had a generation been so faced with the blank impossibility of accepting the work, thought, and faith of its predecessor. Never had it been so easy to slip out of the stream of tradition, for never had tradition so completely disappeared underground.

" 'He that hath eyes to see, let him see,' " quoth Logan, and he hurled himself into his work, dancing to and fro, squaring his shoulders at it as though the picture were an adversary in a boxing-match.

At half-past four he laid down his brushes and began to arrange the room, pinning photographs on the walls, and unpacking certain articles of furniture, as a rug, a great chair, and mattresses to make a divan, which he had bought that morning. Every now and then he ran to the window, threw up the sash, and looked up and down the street.

At last with a tremor of excitement he leaned out and waved his hand, shut the window, and ran downstairs. In a moment or two he returned with the girl of the Tube station. She was wearing the same clothes, with the addition of a cheap fur boa, and she panted a little from the run upstairs with him.

"I'm glad you came," he said. "I was afraid you wouldn't."

"Oh! It's not far from where I live," she said. "But you are in a mess."

"I've only just got in I would have asked you to my old place, but I had to leave."

"So you're a nartist," she said. "I thought you were something funny."

"Funny!" snorted Logan. "I call a shop-walker funny; or a banker, for that matter, or a millionaire. An artist is the most natural thing to be in the world. . . . Take your hat and gloves off and give me a hand, and then we'll have tea."

"Oh! I love my tea."

"I know all about tea. I get it from a friend of mine in the City. I know how to make it, too."

They worked together, arranging, dusting, keeping deliberately apart and eyeing each other surreptitiously. He liked her slow, heavy, indolent movements, and she exaggerated them for him. She liked his quick, firm, decisive actions, and he accentuated them for her; and she liked his thick, black hair and his strong hands.

He picked up the great chair and held it at arm's length.

"Oo! You are strong," she said.

"I could hold you up like that."

"I'd like to see you try," and she gave a little giggle of protest.

"I will if I don't like you," said he, "and I'll let you drop and break your leg."

She went off into peals of laughter, and he laughed too.

"It's such a jolly day," he said. "It only needed you to come to make everything perfect."

"What made you speak to me the other night?" she asked.

"I liked the look of you."

"But I'm not that sort, you know."

"It isn't a question of being that sort. I wanted to speak to you, and that was enough for me. Sit down and have some tea."

The kettle was boiling, and he had already warmed the pot. He measured out the tea carefully, poured the water onto it, and gave her a blue china cup. He produced an old biscuit-tin containing some French pastry, and then sat on the floor while she consumed the lot.

It gave him great pleasure to see her eat, and he liked her healthy, childish greed. She had the face of a spoiled child, a very soft skin, and plump, yielding flesh. He liked that. It soothed and comforted him to look at her, while at the same time he was irritated by her inward plumpness and easiness.

"You've always had a good time," he said.

"Oh yes! I've seen to that."

"You're not a London girl."

"No; Yorkshire."

"I'm from Lancashire."

"Eeh! lad," she said, her whole voice altering and deepening into an astonishingly full note, "are ye fra' Lancashire? Eeh! a'm fair clemmed wi' London. Eeh! I am glad ye coom fra' Lancashire."

"What are you doing in London?"

"I'm working in Oxford Street, though not one of the big shops."

"Like it?"

"M'm! Well enough."

"Of course you don't, handing out laces and ribbons——"

"'Tisn't laces and ribbons. It's corsets."

"Corsets, then, to women who haven't a tenth of your looks or your vitality."

"It can't be helped if they have the money and I haven't, can it?"

"Money doesn't matter. What's money to you, with all the rich life in you? Money cannot buy that, nor can it buy what will satisfy you."

"And what's that?"

"Love and freedom."

"Ooh! you are a talker."

"I'm not flirting with you. I haven't got time for that."

He laid his hand on her foot, which was covered with a thin cotton stocking. She did not move it.

"You needn't stare at me like that," she said, with a curious thickness in her voice.

"I can't help staring," he answered, "when I mean what I say." He pressed his lips together and scowled, and shook her foot playfully. There was an exhilarating pleasure in startling and mastering her by directness. It was like peeling the bark off a stick. The thin layers of affectation came off easily and cleanly, leaving bare the white sappy smoothness of her innocent sensuality.

"I do mean what I say," he added. "Why should we beat about the bush? I asked you to come to-day because I wanted you. You came because you knew I wanted you."

"You asked me to tea."

"All right. And you'll stay to dinner. People have made love to you before."

"Well, no . . . yes. . . . Not like . . ."

"Don't tell lies," he said. "You saw me at the station long before I saw you, and you wanted me to see you. That was why you stayed at the booking-office."

"You were with such a pretty boy," she said.

"Boy! You're not old enough to care for pretty boys."

"But he *was* pretty."

"Be quiet!" he said, kneeling by her side. "You may want me to take weeks over making all sorts of foolish advances to you, but I'm not going to waste time. I've wasted too much time over that sort of rubbish. We both know what we want and you are going to stay with me."

"No."

"I say yes."

"No." And she sprang to her feet and walked to the door. There she turned. He had picked up her gloves.

"Will you give me my gloves, please?"

"No."

"Will you give me my gloves?"

"No."

"Then I shall go without them."

"Very well. Good-bye."

"If I stay, will you promise not to talk like that?"

"I don't want you to stay under those circumstances."

"You're an insulting beast."

"Not at all. I honour your womanhood by not pretending that it isn't there."

"Will you give me my gloves?"

She ran across and tried to snatch them out of his hand. He gripped and held her, and she gave a wild laugh as he kissed her.

She clung to him as he let her sink back into the great chair. She lay with her eyes closed and her lips parted while he sat and poured himself out another cup of tea. His hand was shaking so that he spilled some tea on his new rug.

"That's all right," he said. "I'll give you a week to get used to me, and if at the end of that time you don't like me, you can go."

"I haven't any friends," she said in a low voice, "and you get sick of girls and the shop. You get sick of going out in the evening up and down the streets and into the cinemas, and finding some damn fool to take you to a music-hall. Such a lot of people and nobody to know."

"There's a lot of fun in living with an artist," he said. "You meet queer people and amusing women, and you wouldn't find me dull to live with."

"I felt queer as I came near the house," she said, "as though I knew something was going to happen. I feel very queer now."

"That's love," said Logan grimly. "Love isn't what you thought it was."

"You must let me go now."

"When will you come again?"

"Never."

"Oh yes, you will."

"Stop it!" she cried. "Stop it! I'm not going to be flummoxed by the like of you."

"But you are," he said. "You poor darling!"

He took her hand and stroked it tenderly.

"Don't you see that you are flummoxed by something that is stronger than both of us? I'm shaken by it, and I'm whipcord. We're poor starving people, God help us! and we can save each other. We knew we could do it at once, when we met. . . . If I said all the pretty things in the world it wouldn't help. We're too far gone for that. When you're starving you don't want chocolates. . . . I'm only saying what I know. It is true of myself. If I have made a mistake about you, I am sorry. You can go. . . . Have I made a mistake?"

For answer she turned towards him, gazed at him with glazing eyes, raised her arms, and drew him into them.

A week later Nelly Oliver dined with Logan and Mendel at the Pot-au-Feu. They had a special dinner and drank champagne, for it was what Logan called the "nuptial feast."

Oliver, as they called her, was flushed with excitement, and kept on telling Mendel that he was the prettiest boy she had ever seen. She called Logan "Pip"—"Pip darling," "Pip dearest," "Pipkin" and "Pipsy"—because she said he was like an orange-pip, bitter and hard in the midst of sweetness.

"Pip says you're a genius," she said to Mendel. "What does he mean?"

Mendel disliked her, though he tried hard to persuade himself that she was charming. He was baffled by the solemnity with which Logan was taking her, for she seemed to him the type made for occasional solace and not for companionship. Exploring her with his mind and instinct, she seemed to him soft and pulpy, not unlike an orange, and if she and Logan were to set up a common life, then he would be like a pip indeed. . . . How could he explain to her the nature of genius? Can you explain the night to an insect that lives but an hour in the morning?

"I don't know," he said brusquely.

Logan was dimly aware that his friend and his girl were not pleasing each other, and he set himself to keep them amused. He succeeded fairly well, but his humour was forced, for he was under the spell of the girl and the thought of the adventure to which she had consented. She knew it, and was loud and shrill and triumphant, continually setting Mendel's teeth on edge, for the purity of his instinct was disgusted by the blurring and swamping of life by any emotion, and the quality of hers was not such as to win indulgence.

"Logan will tell you what genius is," he said.

"She'll find that out soon enough if she lives with me," growled Logan a little pompously.

Oliver put her head on one side and looked languishingly at Mendel as she drawled:—

"It's a pity you haven't got a nice girl. Then there would be four of us."

"Don't be a fool!" snapped Logan. "What does he want with girls at his age?"

Oliver's lips trembled and she pouted in protest.

"I only thought it would be nice to round off the party. When you're in love you can't help wanting everybody else to have some too."

Mendel was torn between dislike of her and admiration of Logan's masterful handling of the problem of desire. . . . No nonsense about getting married or falling in love. He saw the woman he wanted and took her and made her his property, and the woman could not but acquiesce, as Oliver had done. In a dozen different ways she acknowledged Logan's lordship, even in her deliberate efforts to exasperate him. Their relationship seemed to Mendel simple and excellent, and he envied them. How easy his life would become if he could do the same! What freedom there would be in having a woman to throw in her lot with his! It would settle all his difficulties, absolve him from his dependence on his family, and deliver him from the attentions of unworthy women.

"How shall we dress her?" asked Logan.

Mendel took out his sketch-book and drew a rough portrait of Oliver in a gown tight-fitting above the waist and full in the skirt.

"I should look a guy in that," she said. "It's nothing like the fashion."

"You've done with fashion," said Logan. "You've done with the world of shops and snobs and bored, idiotic women. You're above all that now. In the first place there won't be any money for fashion, and in the second place there's no room in our kind of life for rubbish.

You're a free woman now, and don't you forget it, or I'll knock your head off."

"But it's a horrible, ugly dress," said Oliver, almost in tears.

"It's what you're going to wear. I'll buy the stuff to-morrow and make it myself. What colour would you like?"

"I won't wear it."

"Then you can go back to your shop."

"You know I can't. I've said good-bye to all the girls."

"Then you'll wear the dress."

"I shan't."

"For God's sake don't quarrel," said Mendel. "One would think you had been married for ten years. Let her wear what she likes until she wants some new clothes."

"Highty Tighty! Little Boy!" sang Oliver. "You talk as though I were a little girl."

"You behave like one," snapped Mendel, and her face was overcast with a cloud of malignant sulkiness.

They went on to a music-hall, where Logan and she sat with their arms locked and their shoulders pressed together, whispering and babbling to each other.

Mendel sat bolt upright with his arms folded staring at the stage but seeing nothing, so lost was he in the contemplation of the strange turn of affairs by which the adventure which had promised to lead him straight to art had deposited him in a muddy little pool of life. He would not submit to it. He would not surrender Logan and all the hopes he had aroused. Prepared as he had been to follow Logan through fire, he would not shrink when the way led through the morass. Friendship was to him no fair-weather luxury, and nothing but falsehood or faithlessness in his friend could make him relinquish it.

He told himself that Logan would soon tire of it, that Oliver would go the way of her kind. She was, after all, better than Hetty Finch, since she had a capacity for childish enjoyment.

She revelled in the sentimental ditties and the suggestive humours of the comedians, pressed closer and closer to Logan, and grew elated and strangely exalted as the evening wore on. And as they left the music-hall she gripped Mendel's arm and brought her face close to his and whispered:—

"Do wish me luck, Kühler. Give me a kiss for luck."

He kissed her and mumbled: "Good luck!"

"Come and see us to-morrow," she said. "We shall be all right to-morrow."

"Oh, come along!" cried Logan, dragging her away; and Mendel stood in the glaring light of the portico and watched them as, arm in arm, they were swallowed up in the crowd hurrying and jostling its way home to the dark outer regions of London.

He had an appalling sense of being left out of it. Everything passed and he remained. He lived in a circle of light into which, like moths, came timid, blinking, lovable figures, and he loved them; but they passed on and were lost in the tumultuous, heaving darkness of life, into which alone he could not enter. . . . Did he desire to enter it? He did not know, but he was hungry for something that lay in it, or, perhaps, beyond it.

CHAPTER VII

MR. TILNEY TYSOE

LOGAN with Oliver was more startling and exhilarating than before. He was filled with a ferocious energy, and his programme was distended with it.

He said to Mendel:—

"She's an inspiration. I have found what I was seeking. You have given me the inspiration of art. Through you I shall reach the heights of the spirit. She has given me the inspiration of life, and through her I shall plumb the very depths of humanity. She is marvellous. All the exasperation of modern life is in her, all the impatient brooding on the threshold of new marvels. You think she is stupid, I know, but that is only because she has in herself such an immense wealth of instinctive knowledge of life that she does not need to judge it by passing outward appearances. I am amazed at her, almost afraid of her. Something tremendous will come out of her. . . . By God! It makes me sick to think of all the dabbling in paint that goes on, not to speak of all the dabbling in love. Love? The word has become foolish and empty. I don't wish to hear it uttered ever again. . . . I swear that if it doesn't come out in paint I shall write poetry. Oh! I can feel the marrow in my bones again, and my veins are full of sap. . . . But I want to talk business."

"Business?" said Mendel, who had been upset and bewildered by this outburst.

"Yes. I want you to approve my programme, for you must have a programme. It is all very well to work by the light of inspiration. That can work quite well as far as you yourself are concerned, but what about the public? What about the other artists?—damn them! We're going to burst out of the groove, but we must have a good reason for doing so."

"Surely it is reason enough that one can't work in it."

"Not enough for them. They must be mystified and impressed. They must be unable to place us. They must feel that we are up to something, but they must be unable to say what it is."

"I don't care what they say," said Mendel.

"But you must care. When we have carried out the programme, then you can do as you like, but till then we must pull together. We must do it for the sake of art. We must make a stand, not to found a school or to say that this and no other style of drawing is right, but to assert the sacred duty of the artist to paint according to his vision and his creative instinct."

This was coming very near to Mendel's own feeling, and he remembered the torture he had been through to learn the Detmold style of drawing, and how some virtue had gone out of his work in the effort.

"It is the artist's business," said Logan, "to create out of the life around him an expression of it in form."

"I agree," said Mendel.

"Accurate imitation is not necessarily an expression, is it? You know it isn't. A picture must be a created thing. It must have a life of its own, and to have that it must grow through the artist's passion out of the life around him. It is all rubbish to look back, to talk of going back to the Primitives or the Byzantines or Egypt. You can learn a great deal from those old people about pictures, but you cannot learn how to paint your own pictures from them, because you can only live in your own life and your own time, and if you are a good artist your work will transcend both. . . . Now, tell me, where is the work that is expressing the glorious, many-coloured life of London, where is the work that does not give you a shock as you come to it out of the street, the thrilling, vibrant street, making you feel that you are stepping back ten, twenty, fifty years? . . . Why has life outstripped art?"

"I don't know," said Mendel, whose head had begun to ache.

"It has not only outstripped it," continued Logan. "It has begun to despise it."

The postman knocked, and Mendel ran downstairs in feverish expectation of a letter from Morrison, to whom he had written imploring her to come again, or, if not, at least to let him have her address in the country. There was no letter for him, and as soon as he returned with a blank, disappointed face, Logan went on:—

"People collect pictures as they collect postage-stamps, to keep themselves from being bored. Naturally they despise pictures, and they despise us for accepting those conditions. They are intolerable, and we must make an end of them. We are in a tight corner, and we should leave no trick and twist and turn untried to get out of it. If we do not do so then there will be no art, as there is no drama, no music, and no literature, and there will be no authority among men, and humanity will go to hell. It is on the road to it, and the artists have got to stop it."

Mendel had not heard a word. He sat with his head in his hands thinking of Morrison, and hating her for the blank misery in which she had plunged him.

"Humanity," said Logan cheerfully, "is fast going to hell. It likes it; and, as the democratic idea is that it should have what it likes, not a finger, not a voice is raised to stop it. Everything that stands in the way—ideals, decency, responsibility, passion, love—everything is smashed. Nothing can stop it unless their eyes are opened and their poor frozen hearts are thawed."

"What did you say?" asked Mendel, having half-caught that last phrase.

"We must try to stop it," said Logan. "We may be smashed and swept aside, but we must try to stop it. . . . I've been to see Cluny to-day. He has sold all your things except one drawing."

"I know," replied Mendel, who had received an amazing account which showed about two-thirds of his earnings swallowed up in colours, brushes, frames, and photographs. He knew, but he was not interested. He was unhappy and restless and felt completely empty.

"We passionate natures," said Logan, striding up and down like Napoleon on the quarter-deck of the *Bellerophon*—"we passionate natures must take control. We must be the nucleus of true fiery stuff to resist the universal corruption. We must be dedicated to the wars of the spirit."

"I've got a splitting headache," said Mendel. "Do you mind not talking so much? The important thing for a painter is painting. What happens outside that doesn't matter."

"You think so now," said Logan, "but you wait. You'll find that painting won't satisfy you. You will want to know what it is all for, and one of these days you will be thankful to me for telling you. . . . Cluny has taken on some of my things, and he has agreed to our having an exhibition together. What do you say to that?"

"So long as I sell I don't care where I exhibit. Exhibitions are always horrible. They always make pictures look mean and insignificant."

"You are in a mood to-day."

"I tell you," cried Mendel in a fury—"I tell you I know what art is better than anybody. It touches life at one point, and one point only, and there it gives a great light. If life is too mean and beastly to reach that point, so much the worse for life. It does not affect art, which is another world, where everything is beautiful and true. I know it; I have always known it. I have lived in that world. I live in it, and I detest everything that drags me away from it and makes me live in the world of filth and thieves and scoundrels. Yes, I detest even love, even passion, for they make a fool and a beast of a man."

"Young!" said Logan. "Very young! You'll learn. . . . But do be sensible and control your beast of a temper. Never mind my programme if it doesn't interest you. Will you accept Cluny's offer? It is worth it, for it will make you independent."

"How much does he want?"

"A dozen exhibits each."

"Oh! very well."

"And will you come and dine to-night with my fool of a patron, Mr. Tilney Tysoe?"

"I don't want to know fools. I know quite enough already."

"But I've promised to take you. . . . He adores Bohemians, as he calls us, and he buys pictures."

"Does he give you good food?"

"Some of the best in London."

"All right."

"Meet us at the Paris Café at seven-thirty. Don't dress. Tysoe would be dreadfully disappointed if you didn't turn up reeking of paint. It would be almost better not to wash."

"Is Oliver going?"

"Yes. Do you mind?"

"No. . . . No."

It was an enormous relief to Mendel when Logan went. His enthusiasm was too exhausting, and it was maddening to have him talking of success and the triumph of art and the wars of the spirit when life had apparently reached up and extinguished the light of art altogether. For a brief moment, for a day or two, it had almost seemed to him that life and art were one, that everything was solved and simple, that he would henceforth only have to paint and pictures would flow from his brush as easily as song from a bird. This illusion had survived even the blow of Morrison's departure. He believed that it was enough for him to have had that hour of illumination, and that, if go she must, he could do without her. The flash of light had been the same, magnified a thousand times, as the inspiration that set him at work on a picture and then left him to wrestle with the task of translating it into terms of paint. She had appeared to him exactly in the same visionary way, an image shining in truth and beauty, an emanation from that other world, and he had thought he would at worst be left with the terrible ordeal of translating the vision into paint. . . . But when he looked at his pictures they oppressed him with their lifelessness and dark dullness, and the idea of painting disgusted him. It was even an acute pain, almost like a wound upon his heart, to handle a brush. He could not finish the portrait of his father and mother, and, at best, he could only force himself to paint flower-pieces.

He was incapable of deceiving himself. He had never heard of devout lovers sighing in vain, and he had no sources of comfort within himself. Never had he shrunk from any torment, and this was so cruel as to be almost a glory, except that it meant such a deathly stillness and emptiness. He could not understand it, and he knew that it was past the comprehension of all whom he knew, even his mother. But he set his teeth and vowed that he would understand it if it took years. . . . A little girl, a little Christian girl! How was it possible?

There was some relief in the thought of her, but very little. She was still too visionary, and when he tried to think of her in life, by his side, it was impossibly painful.

Where was she? Why did she not write? Her silence was like ice upon his heart. . . . What kind of place did she live in? Among what people? How was he to imagine her? . . . To think of her among the trees or under the chestnut-tree was to be torn with impulses that could find no outlet; desires for creation that made painting seem a sham and a mockery.

So keen, and fierce, and deep was his suffering that death seemed a little thing in comparison. When he tried to think of death he knew that it was not worth thinking of, and he was ashamed that the thought should have been in his mind.

He knew that he must understand or perish. To say that he was in love was hopelessly inadequate. He knew how people were when they were in love. They were like Rosa, like animals, stupid and thick-sighted, with a thickening in their blood. But he was possessed with a clairvoyance that made everything round him seem transparent and flimsy, while thought crept stealthily, like a cat on a wall, and emotion was confounded.

For days he had hardly left his studio, and it was only with the greatest effort that he could bring himself to join Logan at the Paris Café. He felt weak, and the streets looked very strange, clear and bright, as they do to a convalescent. As he entered the café it seemed years since he had been there, ages since he had sat there trembling with excitement as he waited for the great Calthrop to come in. He remembered that excitement so vividly that something like it came rushing up in him, and he clutched at it for relief. . . . Calthrop was there with his little court of models and students. Mendel found himself laughing nervously as he stood and waited for the great man to recognise him. Calthrop looked up and nodded to him. He was wildly, absurdly delighted. He rushed over to Logan and Oliver and shook them enthusiastically by the hand.

"Isn't it a splendid place?" he cried.

"Have something to drink," said Logan. "You've been overworking."

"You must say it's a splendid place," insisted Mendel, "or I shall go home. Just by that table where Calthrop is sitting is where I was arrested."

"Oh, which is Calthrop?" asked Oliver eagerly

"The big man over there," said Mendel. "I was arrested just there, and I had to go on my knees to the manager to make him allow me to come here again. I had to apologise to him. At the time it was the greatest tragedy of my life."

He had forgotten his dislike for Oliver in his elation at finding himself gay again, and he chattered on of the days when the café had seemed to him a heaven full of heroes. Oliver listened to him like a child. She loved stories, and she leaned forward and drank in his words, and she appeared to him as a very beautiful woman, desirable, intoxicating. Yet because Logan was his friend he would not envy him, but rejoiced in his possession of this rare treasure, a woman who could deliver up to him all the warm secrets of life. And he could not help saying so, and telling them how happy it made him to be with them.

Logan and Oliver glanced at each other, and their hands met in a fierce grip under the table. Mendel could not see more than their glance, but the meeting of their eyes sent a flame like a white-hot sword darting at his heart. The sharp pain released him, and sent him shooting up into a wilder gaiety.

He felt a hand on his shoulder, and, turning with a start, he saw Mr. Sivwright, his first master, standing above him. He rose and shook hands.

"I am glad to see you," said Mr. Sivwright. "I've been meaning to write to you, but I've been away, out of London."

Mendel introduced him to his friends and asked him to sit down.

"I can't stop a moment," said Mr. Sivwright, "I'm very busy. I have just started a club for artists—opens at eleven. These absurd closing hours, you know. I hope you'll join. It has been open a week. Great fun, and I want some frescoes painted. . . . I'm very proud of your success, Kühler. I feel I had my hand in it."

He produced a prospectus and laid it on the table, bowed awkwardly to Oliver, and with a self-conscious swagger, as though he felt the eyes of all in the café upon him, made his way out.

"Who's that broken-down tick?" asked Logan.

"Sivwright," answered Mendel. "He taught me when I was a boy. He's a very bad artist, and he thinks art ended with Corot. I learned to paint like Corot. Really! I used to go with him to the Park and weep over the trees in the twilight: I never thought I should see him again."

"Oh! people bob up," said Logan. "We go on getting longer in the tooth, but people recur, like decimals."

"Would you like to go to his club?" asked Mendel. "It says 'Dancing.' I feel like dancing."

"Oh! I love dancing," said she.

Logan assumed his air of mysterious importance and said it was time to go to Tysoe's.

"We're twenty minutes late," he said; "Tysoe would be dreadfully put out if we were punctual."

As Mendel had plenty of money they took a taxi-cab.

Mr. Tilney Tysoe was an idealist, and he had no other profession. He was a very tall man with a long cadaverous face, great bulging, watery eyes, and extraordinarily long hands, which hung limply from his wrist, except when he was excited, when they shot up with extreme violence, and carried his arms with them into a gesture so awkward that he had to find relief from it in a shrug. He was devoted to the arts, had a stall at the opera, a study full of books, and several rooms full of pictures. An artist was to him a great artist, a book that pleased him was a great book, and his constant lament was over the dearth of great men in public life. It gave him the keenest delight to see Logan, unkempt, wild-haired, shaggy, violent and brusque, enter his daintily furnished drawing-room, and his eyes passed eagerly to

Oliver, looking just as she ought to have done, the mistress of a Bohemian.

"Delighted! Delighted!" he said as he coiled his long white hand round Mendel's workmanlike paw. "My wife, I regret to say, is away. She will be so sorry to have missed you. Like me, she is tired of the shallow, artificial people we live among. We both adore sincere, real people. I adore sincerity. Sincerity is genius."

"That is true," said Logan in a sepulchral voice that made Mendel jump. "At least, where you find sincerity, you may be sure that genius is not far behind."

"I bought a picture of yours the other day, Mr. Kühler," said Tysoe. "I am ashamed to think how little I gave for it, but works of art are priceless, are they not?"

"Mine are," said Mendel, overcoming his disgust and beginning to enjoy the game.

"You think so," rejoined Tysoe with an undulation of his long body. "And why shouldn't you say so? You are sincere and strong. You must force your talent upon an ungrateful world."

A man-servant announced dinner, and Tysoe gave his arm to Oliver and led her downstairs, while Logan put his hand on Mendel's shoulder and said with a chuckle:—

"Be sincere."

Mendel began at once with the soup, as though he had been wound up.

"I have won every possible prize for painting and drawing, and the first picture I exhibited was the sensation of the year in art circles."

"I remember it," said Tysoe.

"Like my friend Logan, I am profoundly dissatisfied with the state of art in England, and though I am not an Englishman I have sufficient love for the country to wish to do my share in redeeming it. The first essential is a new technique, the second essential is a new spirit, and the third essential is sincerity."

"Wonderfully true!" cried Tysoe. "Have some sherry. Wonderfully true! Now, take the ordinary man. He might feel all that, but would he dare to say it? No. That is why I, as an idealist, delight in the society of artists. You know where you are with them. Facts are facts with them."

"I do like this sherry wine," said Oliver, beginning to feel very comfortable in the warm luxury of the dining-room.

Logan kicked her under the table.

Feeling that more was expected of him, Mendel wound himself up again and went on:—

"Logan and I are going to hold an exhibition together. It will make a great stir, that is, if London is not altogether dead to sincerity. We think it is time that independence among artists was encouraged. Art must not be allowed to stop short at Calthrop——"

He stopped dead as he realised that the wall opposite him held half a dozen drawings by Calthrop. Logan rushed in:—

"Among real artists there is no rivalry. Art is not a competition. It is a constellation, like the Milky Way."

"Ah! La Voie Lactée!" cried Tysoe, dropping into French, as he sometimes did when he was moved. "Quite so! La Voie Lactée!"

"At home in Yorkshire," said Oliver, "there are sometimes two big stars hanging just over the top of the moors, and they say it means love or death if you see it at half-past nine."

Logan took charge of the conversation, frowning at Mendel and Oliver as though they were naughty children. He described the masterpiece he was painting, and Tysoe said:—

"I'm sure I shall like that. It sounds big and forceful, like yourself. Do let me have a look at it before any one else sees it."

Then he added:—

"I saw a charming still-life of yours once. A melon, I think it was. What has become of it?"

"It was sold, I fancy," replied Mendel, who had never painted a melon in his life.

"Ah! A pity. I wanted some little thing for a wedding-present. No one I care about very much, so it must be a little thing."

"He has two or three little things just now," said Logan. "If you sent a messenger-boy round to his studio he would let you see them."

And suddenly Mendel could keep the game up no longer. He began to feel choked by the stuffy, empty luxury of the room, with its excess of plate and glass and flowers and furniture and pictures. His head seemed to be on the point of bursting. He must get out—out and away. He wanted to laugh, to scream with laughter, to shout, to die of laughter, anything to shake off the oppressive folly of his host. And he began to laugh, to shake and heave with it. He suppressed it, but at last he burst out with a roar and rushed from the room.

"Overworked," said Logan imperturbably. "That's what it is. The poor devil hasn't learned sense yet. It's work, work, work with him, all the time. He thinks of nothing but his art, you know. Never has, ever since he was a boy. . . . He'll be a very great genius, and I shall be left far behind."

"Not you," said Tysoe, "not you. I know no man in whom I have greater faith than you."

"Do you think him as good as all that?" said Oliver eagerly. "I'm always telling him Kühler's not a patch on him."

Meanwhile Mendel had taken refuge in the lavatory, where he shouted and shook and cried with laughter. When he had recovered himself he crawled back to the dining-room muttering inaudible apologies.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I've not been myself lately."

"You mustn't overdo it," said Tysoe kindly. "You have plenty of time. You need be in no hurry to overtake Logan. He is entering upon maturity. Your time will come."

Mendel felt disturbed. He had not thought of Logan seriously as a painter, certainly not as a rival or a colleague. Logan was his friend. That Logan painted was incidental. It irritated him to have to sit and listen to him holding forth about painting. He had always liked Logan's talk, but had never really connected it with his work. It was just talk, like reading, or going to the cinema—a sop, a drug, soothing and pleasant when he was in the mood for it, maddening when he was not.

It was as though a spring had been touched, releasing his intelligence, which had always been kept apart from his work. For the first time he felt, though never so little, detached from it, while at the same moment the awful inward pressure of his emotional crisis was relaxed. He was happier, and less wildly gay, and he began to realise that he had astonishingly good food in front of him, good wine in plenty, delicious fruits to come, and fragrant coffee brewing there on the sideboard among bright-hued liqueur bottles. . . . There was no need to listen to Logan. There was pleasure enough in eating and drinking and watching Oliver, and thinking how good it would be to dance with her, and perhaps with others—little women whom he would hold in his arms and feel them yield to every movement that he made. . . .

He was left alone with Oliver after dinner, while Logan and Tysoe retired to the study.

"You've made him very happy," he said rather unsteadily.

"Oh, yes!" said she. "It was like a Fate, wasn't it? I always had a feeling that I wasn't like other girls. I always thought something out of the way would happen to me, though I never thought of anything like this."

"You mustn't tell me about him," said Mendel.

"I must tell some one or I shall die. He's so extraordinary. He says its something deeper than love, and I think it must be."

"You must not talk about it," he said.

"It makes all the stuff he talks about seem silly. I don't understand it, do you?"

She lay back in her chair and swung her foot, with her eyes fixed on the door waiting for Logan to return.

Mendel's dislike of her sprang up in him again, and he was a little afraid of her: of her big, fleshy body, so full now of little trickling streams of pleasure; of her eyes, watching, watching, with the strange, glassy steadiness of the eyes of a bird of prey. . . . He decided that he would not dance with her. He would dance with the others—the little, harmless, pretty fools.

To reassure himself he told himself that Logan was happy, and strong enough to resist the growing will in this woman.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MERLIN'S CAVE

LOGAN had cajoled twenty pounds out of Mr. Tysoe, who stood on his doorstep, dangling his long hands, while his admired guests crept into a taxi-cab. He swung from side to side:—

"I have had a most delightful evening—most charming, most inspiring."

Inside the cab Logan waved the cheque triumphantly and Oliver tried to snatch it from him. They had an excited scuffle, which ended in a kiss.

"What's the matter with the man?" asked Mendel.

"He's just a fool," replied Logan, "a padded fool. His only virtue is that he does really think me a wonderful fellow, and he is kind. But how I hate such kindness, the last virtue, the last refuge of the decrepit! It is a perfume, a herb with which they are embalmed."

"I thought he was a very nice old gentleman," said Oliver.

"He seemed to me," said Mendel, "the kind of man who thinks of nothing but women all day long."

"Hit it in once!" cried Logan. "A parrot will not do more for an almond than he will for a commodious drab. He could take a nun and by force of living with her and surrounding her with every luxury turn her into a whore, because she would in time become only another luxury. That is what men grow into if they lose the spirit of freedom. . . . Where are we going to?"

"I told the man to go to Sivwright's club. It is called The Merlin's Cave."

The club proved to be a cellar filled with little tables. There was a commissionaire at the door and a book had to be signed. The rack of the cloakroom contained several silk-lined overcoats and opera-hats.

"It's going to be damned expensive," said Logan.

"I'll pay," replied Mendel. "It's my fault."

Two tall young men in immaculate evening dress had entered just after them. They gave out an air of wealth and cleanliness and made Logan and Oliver look common and shabby. Mendel hated the two young men. What had they done to look so well-fed and unruffled? Obviously they had only to hold out their hands to have everything they wanted put into them. . . . They looked slightly self-conscious and ashamed of themselves, and wore a look of alarmed expectancy as they went downstairs.

Why did they come there if they were ashamed? and why did they expect an Asmodean lewdness of an artists' club, they for whom the flesh-markets of the music-hall promenades existed?

"Real swells, aren't they?" said Oliver, overawed.

The strains of a small orchestra came floating up the stairs.

"Come on," said Mendel, "I want to dance." And he caught her by the wrist and dragged her downstairs.

A girl was standing on a table singing an idiotic song with a syncopated chorus which a few people took up in a half-hearted fashion. The sound of it was thin and depressing.

"The same old game," said Logan. "Playing at being wicked. Why can't they stick to their commercial beastliness? I should be ashamed to bring any woman into this. I am ashamed." He half rose from his chair.

"Oh! don't go," pleaded Oliver, who was entranced with her first sight of what she called a gay life. It was to her like a stage spectacle. "Oh! there's that Calthrop; I suppose all those odd women with him are models."

Calthrop was surrounded by admiring students, among them Morrison, sitting prim and astonished and obviously amazed to find herself where she was. Mendel began to tremble, and his heart beat violently, as he stared at her—stared and stared.

She had lied to him then! She had not had to go home! She could strike him down and then come to amuse herself at such a place as this!

Was she with Mitchell? No, Mitchell was not among the satellites.

How strange she looked! a wild violet in a hot-house. He waited for her to glance in his direction, but she seemed to be absorbed in the singer and in the song, and every now and then she smiled, though obviously not at the song—at something that amused her or pleased her in her thoughts. She could smile then and be happy, and all his wild emotions had made no invasion into her life. . . . No; she would not look in his direction. Perhaps she had seen him come in and refused to see him.

Would the dancing never begin? The dancing took place on a slightly raised floor. If he danced there she would have to see him.

He found a warm hand placed on his leg, and turning he saw Jessie Petrie, a model, with whom he had danced at the studios and at the Detmold.

"I thought I was never going to see you again," she said, "and Mitchell said you had gone mad."

"Do I look it?" he asked.

"No. You look bonnier than ever. I'm on my own again now. Thompson has gone to Paris. He says the only painters are there. I think he's going mad, because he paints nothing but stripes and triangles. And he *was* such a dear. . . . I'm feeling awfully lonely because Tilly has gone to Canada. Samuelson gave her the chuck and she went out to her cousin in Canada, who had always been wanting to marry her. . . . Are you still down in Whitechapel? I do hate going to see you there. Why don't you move up to the West End? I could come and live with you then, for I do hate being at a loose end."

She was adorably pretty, dark, with eyes like damsons, lovely red lips, touched up with carmine, and a soft white neck that trembled as she spoke like the breast of a singing bird.

"Oh! who do you think I saw the other day? Hetty Finch! She has a flat and a motor-car, but I don't believe she is married." She looked suddenly solemn as she added: "The baby's dead." Then she rattled on: "Isn't she lucky? But she's an awful snob. Would hardly speak to me!"

"She's a beast of a woman."

"What do you think of this place? I suppose if the swells come it'll be a success, but they do spoil it."

"Yes," said Mendel. "They spoil everything. When do they begin to dance?"

"They've nearly finished the programme. They have to have a programme to make people eat and drink."

"Let's have some champagne."

He called the waiter and ordered a bottle.

"Been selling lately?"

"No," he said; "but I want to dance. Do you hear? I want to dance."

"Dancing," Logan threw in, "is the beginning of art. It is too primitive for me, or I'm too old."

A thin-faced long-haired poet mounted the table and read some verses, which the popping of corks and the clatter of knives and forks rendered inaudible. The poet went on interminably, and at last some one began drumming on the table and shouting "Dance! Dance! Dance!" The poet stuck to it. Bread was thrown at him and the shouting became general.

At last the orchestra struck up through the poet's reedy chanting, couples made their way to the stage, and the dancing began. Morrison still sat prim and preoccupied. Mendel put his arm round Jessie's waist, his fingers sank into her young, supple body, and he lifted her to her feet and rushed with her over to the stage. The whole place was humming with life, beating to the chopped rhythm of the vacant American tune.

"I do love dancing with you," said Jessie, as he swung her into the moving throng of brilliantly dressed women and black-coated men, so locked together that they were like one creature, a strange, grotesque quadruped. And Jessie so melted into him, so became a part of him, that he too became another creature, an organism in the whirling circle supported and spun round by the music. It was glorious to feel his will relaxing, to feel the lithe, soft woman in his arms yield to every impulse, every movement. He danced with a terrific concentration, with a wiry collected force that made Jessie feel as light as a feather.

"Oo! That was lovely," she said when the music stopped. "You do dance lovely."

"It was pretty good," said Mendel. "But wait until they play a waltz."

"I want to dance with you," cried Oliver. "You said I should dance with you."

And she had the next dance with him; but there was no lightness in her, only a greedy fumbling after sensation.

"This is awful!" thought Mendel, never for a moment losing himself, and all the while conscious of Morrison sitting there unmoved: of Morrison, whom he was trying to forget. Oliver seemed to envelop him, to swallow him up. He was conscious of holding an enormous woman in his arms and her contact was distasteful. The dance seemed endless. Would the music never stop? . . . One, two, three. . . . One, two, three. . . . It was like a dancing class with the fat Jewesses at home. . . . And all the time he was conscious of Morrison's big blue eyes staring at him. Would she never stop her damnable smiling?

He returned Oliver to Logan shamefacedly, as though he were paying a long-standing debt.

Jessie returned from her other partner to him.

"Oh! It isn't anything like the same," she said; "and that is such a lovely tune to dance to."

Now that the dancers were warmed up they refused to allow any intervals. They had their partners and were unwilling to stop. The orchestra was worked up into a kind of frenzy, and Mendel and Jessie were whirled into an ecstasy. They abandoned the conventional steps and improvised, gliding, whirling, swooping suddenly through the dancers. Sometimes he picked her up and whirled her round, sometimes his hands were locked on her waist and she bent backwards—back, back, until he pulled her up and she fell upon his breast, happy, panting, deliriously happy.

Morrison sat watching. She was trembling and felt very miserable. She had been brought there by Clowes, who had been unable to resist the flattery of Calthrop's invitation. All these people seemed to her to be pretending to be happy, and she was oppressed with it all. She had not seen Mendel until he mounted the stage, and then her heart ached. She remembered the etched phrases of his letter to her. She had written to him, but nothing she could express on paper conveyed her feeling, her sense of being in the wrong, and her deep, instinctive conviction of the injustice of that wrong. . . . He had placed her in the wrong by talking of marriage so prematurely. As she looked round the room she was oppressed by all the men: great, hulking creatures, clumsy, cocksure, insensible, spinning their vain thoughts and vainer emotions round the women as a spider spins its threads round a caught fly. . . . She had often watched spiders dealing with the booty in their webs, and Calthrop reminded her of a spider when he looked at Clowes and laid his hand on her shoulder or fingered her arm. And Clowes lay still like a caught fly and suffered it. . . . Morrison was in revolt against it all. She was full of sweet life, and would not have it so treated. Her prudery was not shocked, for she had no prudery. The men might have their women so, if the women liked it, but never, never would she be so treated.

It was because she had been able to sweep aside the sticky threads of vanity with Mendel that the ecstasy of the woods and the Heath had been possible.

As she watched him now, she knew that he was different from all the others. He had brought an exaltation into the face of the common little girl who was his partner. He was giving her life, not taking it from her.

Yet to see him made her unhappy. The music was vulgar, the people were vulgar, and he had no true place among them. But how he enjoyed it all!

She shook with impatience at herself. It was hateful to be outside it, looking on, looking on. A young student had pestered her to dance with him. She turned to him and said:—

"I want to dance, please."

Delighted, he sprang to his feet, gave her his arm, and whirled her into the dance.

Slowing down to take breath, Mendel looked in her direction. She was gone! A black despair seized him, a groan escaped him; he hugged Jessie tight against his body and plunged madly into the dance.

The musicians had been given champagne. The violinist began to embroider upon the tune and the 'cellist followed with voluptuous thrumming chords.

Jessie gave little cries of happiness to feel the growing strength in Mendel's arms, the waxing power of his smooth movements. She gave little cries like the call of a quail, and he laughed gleefully every time she cried. He could feel the force rising in him. It would surely burst out of him and break into molten streams of laughter, leaving him deliciously light, as light and absurd as dear little Jessie, who was swinging on the music like a dewdrop on a gossamer. . . . If only the music would last long enough! He would be as tremulous and light as she, and while that lightness lasted he could love her and taste life at its highest point—for her. . . . She was aware of his desire, and swung to it. It was like a wind swaying her, thistledown as she was; like a wind blowing her through the air on a summer's day. O that it might never end, that the sky might never be overcast, that the rain might never come and the night might never fall. . . . Terrible things had happened to Jessie in the night, and she was happy in the sun.

Mendel was past all dizziness. The room had spun round until it could spin no more, and then it had unwound itself, making him feel weak and giddy. He was very nearly clear-headed, and every now and then he caught a glimpse of Logan sketching and of Oliver, sitting with a sulky pout on her lips and tears in her eyes because she wanted to dance and knew she had made a failure of it.

"Lovely! lovely! lovely!" sighed Jessie.

"You are like the white kernel of a nut," said Mendel, "when the shell is broken."

"Do let me come and sit for you," she said. "I won't want anything except my dinner."

"Better keep to the dancing," he answered, as he spun her round to stop her talking.

She began to stroke his neck and to press her face against his breast. At the same moment he saw Morrison among the dancers. He slowed down and then stopped dead. The music rose to an exultant riot of sound.

"Please, please!" cried Jessie, clinging to him; but he had forgotten her.

Morrison and her partner swept past him, and he watched them go the full circle. She saw him standing, and as she approached broke away from her partner.

"Why aren't you dancing with me?" he said, shaking with eagerness to hear her speak.

"I'm no good at dancing," she said. "I don't enjoy it."

"Who brought you here? Calthrop?"

"He brought Clowes and me. . . . You mustn't stop dancing. Your partner. . . ."

"Please, please!" cried Jessie, stamping her foot; "the music is going to stop."

"Wait a moment," he said, turning to Morrison. "Are you going home?"

"The day after to-morrow."

"I must see you."

Before she could reply her partner, who had lost his temper, seized her and made her finish the dance, and when it was over he marched her back to Calthrop's party, and he never left her side again.

Mendel returned to Logan and Oliver, to find them impatient to go. The end of an evening always found them in this impatient mood.

"It all bears out what I say," said Logan. "All this night-club business. People have to go mad in London before they can taste life at all."

"Do you mind if I come home and sleep on your sofa?" asked Mendel. "I can't face my studio to-night."

"Why don't you take Jessie home with you?" said Logan; "I'm sure she'd like to."

Mendel winced, and Jessie's lips began to tremble. She was still suffering from the sudden end to her happiness. She looked at him, almost hoping that he was going to make reparation to her.

"You know I can't," he said; "I live in my brother's house and he is a respectable married man."

He knew he was in for a terrible night of reaction and desperate blind emotion; at the same time he did not wish to hurt Jessie more than he had done.

"I'll take you home in a cab," he said. "But I won't stay, if you don't mind. I'm done up. If you and Oliver walk half way, Logan, we ought to be there about the same time."

Jessie was appeased. A little kindness went a long way with her, and she hated to be a nuisance to a man.

When the cab stopped outside the door of her lodgings she flung her arms round Mendel's neck and kissed him, saying:—

"You are a darling, and I would do anything in the world for you."

"You shall come and sit for me," he replied. "Good-night!"

"Good-night!"

Good-night! A night of tossing to and fro, of hearing terrifying noises in the darkness, of hearing Logan and Oliver in the next room, of shutting his ears to what he heard, of fancying he heard some one calling him . . . her voice! Surely she had called him, and the ache and the torment in his flesh was the measure of her need of him. . . . Strange, blurred thoughts; gusts of defiance and revolt; glimpses of pictures, subjects for pictures, colours and shapes. . . . His mother's hands clutching a fish and bringing a knife down on to it. There was a blue light on the knife. It would be very hard to get that and to keep it subordinate to the blue in the fish's scales. . . . His father and mother, eternally together, in an affection that never found any expression, harsh and bitter, but strongly savoured, like everything else in their lives. . . . Issy and Rosa, much the same as Logan and Oliver, and to them also he had to shut his ears. . . . The goggle-eyed man at the Pot-au-Feu. . . . London, London, the roaring fiery furnace of London in which he was burning alive, while flames of madness shot up above him. . . . Music. . . . There was a music in his soul, a music and mystery that could rise with an easy power above all the flames. . . . What did it matter that his body was burned, if his soul could rise like that up to the stars and beyond the stars to the point where art touched life and gave out its iridescent beneficent light? . . . Life, flames, body, stars, all might perish and fade away, but the soul had its knowledge of eternity and could not be quenched. . . . Eternal art, divine art, the world of form, shaped in the knowledge of eternity, wherein life and death are but a day and a night. . . . Sickening doubt of himself, sinking down, down into eternity to be a part of it, never to know it, never to see the light of art, lost to eternity in eternity. . . . He sat up in the middle of the night and imagined himself back in the one room in Gun Street, looking at the recumbent bodies of his family, lost in sleep, huddled together in degradation. . . . It would have been better to have gone home with Jessie. She would have given him rest and sleep. . . . No, no, no! . . . She was going away the day after to-morrow. He must see her before she went, with her big blue eyes and short chestnut hair. She had stopped in the middle of the dance. She had broken away from her partner, and on Hampstead Heath she had said "I love you."

CHAPTER IX

"GOOD-BYE"

LOGAN came in early in the morning to make tea. He shut the door carefully and came and sat on Mendel's sofa.

"She says you hate her," he said.

"I?" answered Mendel. "No. I. . . . What can make her say that? Because I didn't dance with her? I had Jessie. You ought to have danced with her."

"I'm glad she didn't dance. It might make her break out. Women are very queer things. You never know where they will break out. . . . You make love to them, touch a spring in them, and God knows where it may lead you. . . . You're not in love with that mop-haired girl, are you?"

"What if I am?"

"She's just a doll-faced miss. You're taken with the type because you're unused to it. For God's sake don't take it seriously. You're much too good to waste yourself on women. She'll drive you mad with purity and chivalrous devotion and all the other schoolgirl twaddle. Leave all that to the schoolboy English. It's all they're good for. They've bred it on purpose to be the mother of more schoolboys. It is the basis of the British Empire. But what is the British Empire to you or any artist? Nothing."

"I don't want to talk about it," said Mendel.

"She won't marry you," said Logan. "She won't live with you. She'll give you nothing. She'll madden you with her conceited stupidity and wreck your work. . . . What you want is what every decent man wants—to take a woman and keep her in her place, so that she can't interfere with him. That's what I've done, and it's made a man of me, but I'm not going to let her know it. She'd be crowing like an old hen that has laid an egg. . . . No farmyard life for me, thanks."

Oliver bawled for her tea and Logan hastened to make it, and disappeared into the bedroom.

Mendel got up and dressed, feeling eager for the day. The sun shone in through the window and filled the room with a dusty glow, making even the shabby bareness of the place seem charming.

"It is a good day," he said to himself. "I shall work to-day." And he was annoyed at not having his canvas at hand.

On an easel stood the picture which Logan had described to Tysoe, a London street scene with a group of people gazing into a shop window. It was a clever piece of work, very adroit in the handling of the paint and pleasing in colour, but Mendel had an odd uncomfortable feeling of having seen it before, and yet he knew that the technique was novel. Yet it was precisely the technique that seemed familiar. Certain liberties had been taken with the perspective which, though they were new to him, did not surprise him.

Logan came in dressed and said that Oliver would not be a minute. She appeared in a dressing-gown.

"Well?" she said; "none the worse for last night?"

"No, thanks," said Mendel. "Why should I be? I enjoyed it."

"Did Logan tell you we were going to Paris?"

"No. He said nothing about it."

"I'm dying to go to Paris. He says they understand the kind of thing we had last night in Paris."

"You're not going for good, are you?" asked Mendel.

"No. Just a trip. I want you to come too. We'll see some pictures and have a good time. I can't speak a word of French, but they say English is good enough anywhere."

"Yes, I'd like to go," said Mendel. "I want a change, before I settle down to working for the exhibition. Is that picture going to be in it?"

"Yes. Do you like it?"

"I like it. It seems to me new. Stronger than most things. All these people going in for thin, flat colour and greens and mauves make me long for something solid."

"I'm going to show that and a portrait of Oliver."

"I want my breakfast," said she.

"Oh! shut up. We're talking. . . . I've just begun the portrait. No psychological nonsense about it. It's just the head of a woman in paint. I don't want any damn fool writing about my picture: she is wiser than the chair on which she sits and the secrets of the antimacassar are hers. A picture's a picture and a book's a book."

"I do want my breakfast," sang Oliver.

Logan went livid with fury.

"Be silent, woman," he said.

"I shan't, so there. I want my breakfast."

"Why the hell don't you get the breakfast then?"

"Because you said you would."

Logan began to prepare the breakfast—rashers of bacon and eggs.

"You don't mind eating pork?" he asked Mendel.

"No. I like it, but I never get it at home."

"Fancy Jews being still as strict as that!" said Oliver. "Just like they were in Shakespeare's time."

"Just as they were in the time of Moses and Aaron," said Mendel. "They don't alter except that they haven't got a country to fight for."

"Thank God!" said Logan, "or there'd be a bloody mess every other week. Fancy a Jewish Empire, with you sent out, like David, to hit the Czar of Russia or Chaliapine in the eye with a stone from a sling. Think of your sister-in-law luring the Kaiser into a tent and knocking a nail through his head. I wish she could, upon my soul I do!"

"I think we should only be led into captivity again," said Mendel. "Our fighting days are over, and some one told me the other day that many of the most advanced artists in Paris are Jews."

"If they were all like you," said Logan, "I shouldn't mind. But I'm afraid they're not. The Jews have got all the money and they keep the other people fighting for it, and charge them a hell of a lot for guns and uniforms to do it with. Oh! there are Christians in it too, but they have to be nice to the Jews to be allowed to share the spoils. I don't wonder the Jews left the Promised Land when they found the world was inhabited by fools who would let them plunder it."

"There's not much plunder in my family," said Mendel.

After breakfast he declared that he must go, and Logan announced that he would walk with him to enjoy the lovely sunny day. Oliver wanted to come too, but he told her to stay where she was, and he left her in tears.

"She's got a bad habit of crying," he said, "and she must be broken of it. She cries if I don't speak to her for an hour. She cries if I go out without telling her where I am going. She cries if I curse and swear over my work, and if I am pleased with it she cries because I am never so happy with her. . . . I feel like hitting her sometimes, but it isn't her fault. She hasn't settled down to it yet. She says I don't love her when she knows she never expected to be loved so much. And she can't get used to it."

"Why don't you paint her crying?" asked Mendel maliciously.

"By Jove! I will," cried Logan. "Damned interesting drawing, with her eyes all puckered up. . . . But it's a shame on a day like this to be out of temper with anything. Lord! How women do spoil the universe, to be sure! Do they give us anything to justify the mess they make of it? . . . Women and shopkeepers. I don't see why one should have any mercy on either of them. I have no compunction in stealing anything I want. Shopkeepers steal from the public all the little halfpennies and farthings of extra profit they exact."

He led Mendel into a picture shop and asked for a reproduction of a picture by Van Tromp, and when the girl retired upstairs to ask about that non-existent artist, he turned over the albums and helped himself to half a dozen reproductions, rolled them up, and put them in his pocket. When the girl came down and said they were out of Van Tromps, he said:—

"I'm sorry. Very sorry to trouble you."

When they were out of the shop he chuckled, and was as elated over his success as Mr. Kuit had been over his exploits.

"Oh! I should be an artist in anything I did," he said. "I don't wonder thieves can't go straight once they get on the lay. If I weren't a painter I should be a criminal."

He walked with Mendel as far as Gray's Inn, and there left him, saying he had another picture-buying flat to go and see, and after that he must pay a visit to Uncle Cluny and keep him up to the mark. He was in fine fettle, and went off singing at the top of his voice.

Mendel bought some flowers on the way home because he wished always to have flowers, even if she were to send no more.

He was sure of himself to-day. He was in love and glad to be in love. Surely it could have no worse suffering than that through which he had passed, and if it did, well, so much the worse for him. . . . He was glad it had happened. His father would not be able to sneer at him any more, as he was always sneering at Issy and Harry—Harry, who had deserted his father and mother for the sweetbreads of Paris. (Jacob always called sweetmeats sweetbreads.) He had a bitter, biting tongue, had Jacob, and the habit of using it was growing on him. Mendel knew that he had deserved many of his sneers, but now they could touch him no longer. His life, like his art, now contained a passion as strong as any Jacob had known in his life, and stronger, because it was wedded to beauty, to which Jacob was a stranger.

He was able to work again at his picture of his father and mother. He could make something of it now, he knew, because he could understand his father and appreciate the strength in him which had kept his passion alive through poverty and a life of constant storms and upheavals. He remembered his father knocking down the schoolmaster, and the soldier in the inn with the heavy glass. Oh yes! Jacob was a strong man, and he had nearly died of love for Golda, the beautiful.

He worked away with an extraordinary zest, and he knew that it was good. As he grew tired during the afternoon he was overcome with a great longing for her to see it, just to see it and to say she liked it. It would not matter much if she did not understand it, so long as she saw it and liked it.

He turned to the roughly sketched portrait of her to ask her if she liked it, and as he did so the door opened and she came in. Her arms were full of flowers, so that her face was resting in them, her dear face, the sweetest of all flowers.

"You said . . . you must see me, so I brought you these to say good-bye."

"Do come in and see my picture. It is nearly finished."

"Oh! It is good," she said shyly.

"I thought you'd like it. I wanted you to like it. Do stay a little and talk."

She sat down and looked about the studio, puckering up her eyebrows nervously and making her eyes very round and large.

"You never told me how old you are," he said nervously.

"I'm nineteen."

"I'm twenty. Just twenty. How long are you going away for?"

"I don't know. Until the winter, I expect."

"What will you do there in the country? It is important that you should tell me, because I must know how to think of you. What shall you do? Is it a big house? Are you—are you rich?"

"No. It is not a very big house. My mother is fairly well off, but I have four brothers, and they all have to go to Oxford and Cambridge. . . . There's a good garden, and I shall spend a lot of time in that, digging and looking after the flowers. And I shall try and do some work. There's a big barn I can have for a studio."

"A big barn. Yes. Are your brothers nice men?"

"Two of them."

"And there's a river and a common. May I write to you?"

She was silent for a long time, and then she said:—

"No. Please don't."

His happiness vanished. It was as though a hole had opened in the floor and swallowed it up.

"Why not?" he asked. "Why not?"

She shrank into herself for a moment, but shook off her cowardice and answered:—

"I don't want to hurt you."

"You said you loved me. You can do what you like with me!"

"You're so different," she said. "Too different."

"From what? From whom? Go on, go on!"

She loved his violence and gained courage from it.

"You mustn't think it mean of me. I don't care a bit what people say, but I don't want to hurt you—in your work, I mean. It isn't all that I think and mean, but it is a part of it, a little part of it. People are furious at our being seen together. It began at the picnic. We were seen walking over the Heath. Clowes told me. She can't bear it. She's a good friend. . . . It hurt me when she told me, and I knew that I must tell you. It isn't only old women. It is all the important people, who can hurt your work."

"Nobody can hurt my work."

"But they can. They are saying your work is bad, all the people who said it was so good only last year, all the people who believed in you. And it's all through me. It's my fault."

She began to weep silently. He was unmoved by the sight of it, so appalled was he by the sudden devastation of his life. Suffering within himself he knew, but hostility from without he had not had to face. . . . Many little slights were explained—men who had given him an indifferent nod, men who had apparently not seen him in the street. In the surprise of it he was blind even to her. It was like a sandstorm covering him up, filling with grit every little chink and crevice of his being. He snorted with fury and contempt.

He shook himself free of the oppression of it. This was nothing to do with her; it was not what he wanted from her—the gossip and tittle-tattle, the sweepings of the studios. The models sickened him of that. . . . So it was his turn now. Well, other men had survived it.

"That isn't why you want to say good-bye."

"No. I'm not pleading to you to let me off, or anything like that. I believe in you more than in anybody else, more than I do in myself. . . . I don't believe in myself much."

It had all seemed clear to her before she had come. He would understand how wrong and twisted the whole thing had become. They would suffer together and they would see how useless such suffering was in a world of beauty and charm and youth, and they would part because they had to part. He would understand, even if she could not rightly understand, for he was strong and simple and direct, and free of the soft vanity of youth.

But he did not understand. He was angry and domineering.

"Why do you say all this?" he said heavily, floundering for words. "What does it mean? Nothing at all. You belong to me. You gave up Mitchell because I said you must. Have you given up Mitchell?"

"Yes."

"Very well then. Nothing else matters. If I want a thing I will break through a Chinese wall to get it. Nothing can stop me, because when I want a thing it is mine already. I want it because it is mine already."

He was making it impossible for her—impossible to go, impossible to stay, impossible to say anything.

Outside in the street the heavy drays went clattering by on the stone setts. When they had passed there came up the shrill cries of children playing in the street, the drone of a Rabbi taking a class of boys in Hebrew. On the hot air came the smell of the street—a smell of women and babies and leather and kosher meat.

"I know the way of women," he said. "My mother has been my friend always. But I do not know your ways. I only know that I love you. You are mine as that picture is mine, and you cannot take yourself from me."

"I don't want to take myself from you," she said, half angry, half in tears. "I want to make you understand me."

"What is there to understand? Do I understand my pictures?" he cried. "Do you want no mystery? How can there be life without mystery? I don't expect you to understand. I only want you to be honest and true to me. . . . I conceal nothing. I am a Jew. I live in this horrible place. My life is as horrible as this place. You know all that, all there is to know, and you love me. You cannot alter me. You cannot change my nature. . . ."

"Don't say any more," she said. "It only becomes worse with talking."

"What becomes worse?"

She could not answer him. She could not say what she felt. The woods, the Heath, and—this; the rattle and smell of the street, the dinginess of the studio, the dinginess of his soul—the dinginess and yet the fire of it. On the Heath he had been like a faun, prick-eared and shaggy, but wild and free as her spirit was wild and free. Here he was rough, coarse, harsh, and tyrannical. She could feel him battering at her with his mind, searching her out, probing into her, and she resented it with all the passion of her modesty. She gathered up all her forces to resist him.

"You are terrible! Terrible!" she cried. "Don't you see that it must be good-bye?"

"I say it must not," he shouted. "I say it is nonsense to talk of good-bye, when we have just met, when the kiss is yet warm on our lips. For a kiss is a holy thing, and I do not kiss unless it is holy. I say it is not good-bye."

"I say it is and must be," she said. "You are terrible. You hurt me beyond endurance."

"And why should you not be hurt? Am I to have all the pain? I want to share even that with you."

"It is impossible," she said dully, unable to share, or deal with, or appreciate the violence of his passion, and falling back on the mulishness which had been developed in her through her tussles with her brothers. Through her mind shot the horrible thought:—

"We are quarrelling—already quarrelling."

To her he seemed to be dragging her down, defiling her. His eyes were glaring at her with a passion that she took for sensuality, because it came out of the dinginess of his soul. And he was stiffening into an iron column of egoism, on which she knew she could make no impression. She knew, too, that her presence was aggravating the stiffening process. . . . She felt caught, trapped, and she wanted to get away. Love must be free—free as the wind on the heath, as the blossom of the wild cherry. Love must have its blossoming time, and he was demanding the full heat of the summer. . . . She must get away.

"Good-bye," she said, holding out her hand.

He took her hand and pulled her to him.

"No! No! No!" she cried. "No! Good-bye! Good-bye!"

She turned away and was gone.

Unable to contain his agony, he flung himself on his bed and sobbed out his grief.

"She is mine!" he moaned. "She is mine, and she cannot take herself from me."

And when his tears were shed he began to think of the other women who had come to him without love, so easily, so gratefully, some of them, and this little girl who loved him could tear herself away—at a fearful cost. He knew that. But if she could tear herself away, if she could say good-bye, what could she know of love?

CHAPTER X

PARIS

MENDEL was able to finish his portrait of Jacob and Golda, but only at the cost of painful and bitter labour. He was torn two ways: longing to finish it, yet dreading the end of it, for he could not see beyond it. Every picture he had painted had brought with it the certain knowledge that it would lead to a better, that he was advancing further on the road to art. But there was a finality about this picture. It was an end in itself. It was not like most of his work, one of a possible dozen or more. A certain stream of his feeling ended in it and then disappeared, leaving him without guide or direction.

Therefore, when the picture was ended he found himself besottedly and uncontrollably in love and in a maddeningly sensitive condition, so that any sudden glimpse of beauty—the stars in the night sky, a girl's face in the train, flowers in a window-box—could set him reeling. More than once he found himself clinging to the wall or a railing, emerging with happy laughter from a momentary lack of consciousness. In the street near his home he found a lovely little girl, of the same type as Sara, but more beautiful. Graceful and lively she was, fully aware of her vitality and charm, and she used to smile at him when he went to meet her as she came out of school, or stood and watched her playing in the street.

At last he asked her shyly if she would come to his studio that he might draw her. She consented and came often. She would chatter away, and, studying her, he was astonished at her womanishness, and he was overwhelmed when she said one day:—

"You don't want to draw me. You only want to look at me."

He was thrust back into the thoughts he had been avoiding. If this child knew already so frankly why he was attracted to her, why could not that other? Why did she seem to insist that he should regard her with the emotions with which he approached a work of art? A work of art could yield up its secret to the emotions, but she could only deliver hers to love dwelling not in any abstract region, but here on earth, in the life of the body. . . . He often thought of her with active dislike, because she seemed to him to be lacking in frankness. If she were going to cause so much suffering, as she must have known she would with her good-bye, then she must have her reasons for it. What did she mean with her neither yes nor no? With women there should be either yes or no. A refusal is unpleasant, but it could be swallowed down with other ills; and there were others. But this girl, this short-haired Christian, blocked his way, and there were no others except as there were cabs on the street and meals on the table.

For a time he avoided Logan and Oliver. He knew that Logan would despise him for his weakness in setting his heart on a girl who ran away from him, for he knew and admired the tremendous force with which his friend had hurled himself into his life with the girl of the station, constantly wooing and winning her afresh and urging her to share his own recklessness. He admired, too, Logan's insistence on an absolute separation of his art and his life with Oliver, who was never for one moment admitted to his mind. Rather to his dismay, but at the same time with a wild rush of almost lyrical impulse, Mendel, finding himself with no other emotion than that of being in love, set himself to paint love. He worked with an amazing ease, painting one picture one day and covering it with another the next, feeling elatedly convinced that everything he did was beautiful, yet knowing within himself that he was in a bad way.

He avoided Logan, but Logan needed him, and came to tell him so.

"It is all very well for you to shut yourself up," he said, "but I can't live without you. You know what Oliver is to me, but it is not enough. The more satisfying she is on one plane, the more I need on the other the satisfaction that she cannot give me. Women can't do it. They simply can't, and it is no good trying. If you try, it means making a mess of both love and art. She is jealous? Very well. Let her be jealous. She enjoys it, and it helps her to understand a man's passion."

"I can't stand it when you talk in that cold-blooded way about women."

"I'm not cold-blooded," said Logan, astonished at the adjective.

"I sometimes think you are, but I am apt to think that of all English people," replied Mendel, wondering within himself if that did not explain Morrison. "Yes. I often wonder what you would be like if you were in an office, wearing a bowler hat, and going to and fro by the morning and evening train."

"Why think about the impossible?" laughed Logan. "Anyhow, I'm not going to let you shut yourself up.

I want to go to Paris, and I can't face three weeks alone with Oliver. Twenty-one days, sixty-three meals. No. It can't be done."

"Yes, I'll go to Paris," thought Mendel. "I will go to Paris and I will forget."

"You must come," urged Logan. "Madame at the Pot-au-Feu has given me the name of a hotel kept by her sister-in-law. Very cheap. Bed and breakfast, and, of course, you feed in restaurants. . . . You want digging out of your hole. I don't know why, but you seem to have insisted more on being Jewish lately. It is much more important for you to be an artist and a man. I regard you as a sacred trust. I do really. You are the only man in England for whom I have any respect, and I need you to keep me decent." He added: "I need you to keep me alive, for, without you, Oliver would gobble me up in a month."

He seemed to be joking, but Mendel could not help feeling that he was at heart serious, and he had the unpleasant sinking of disgust which sometimes seized him when he thought of Logan and Oliver together. He could not account for it, and the sensation gave him a sickly pleasure which made him weaker with Logan than with anybody else. Besides, Logan often bewildered him, and he could not tolerate his inability to grasp ideas except through a mad rush of feeling, and he hated the fact that while Logan's mind seemed to move steadily on, his own crumbled to pieces just at the moment when it was on the point of absorbing an idea.

For these reasons he consented to go to Paris. The three weeks should consolidate or destroy a friendship which had remained for him distressingly inchoate. Deep in his heart he hoped that it would become definite enough and strong enough to drive out his indeterminate love.

To be in love without enjoying love was in his eyes a fatuous condition, undignified, vague, a kind of cuckoldry.

Oliver was aflame with excitement over the trip to Paris. She spoke of it with an almost religious exaltation. As usual, her emotion was entirely uncontrolled, became a physical tremulation, and she reminded Mendel of a wobbling blanc-mange.

The plan was to have a fortnight in Paris and a week at Boulogne, for bathing and gambling at the Casino.

No sooner had he left London than Mendel felt his cares and anxieties fall away from him, and he began to wish he had brought Jessie Petrie. He proposed to wire for her from Folkestone, but Logan pointed out that Oliver could not stand women and was jealous of them.

"She'd say Jessie was making eyes at me," he said. "And if she made eyes at you she'd be almost as bad."

In that Mendel could sympathise with Oliver. He was himself often suddenly, unreasonably, and violently jealous of other men over women for whom he did not care a fig.

He set himself to be nice to Oliver, and she in her holiday mood responded, so that on the boat and in the Paris train Logan was sunk in a gloomy silence, and in the hotel at night, in the next room, Mendel could hear him storming at her, refusing to have anything to do with her, threatening to go home next day unless she promised to keep her claws, as he said, off Kühler. She promised, and they embarked further upon their perilous voyage in search of an unattainable land of satiety.

Their hotel was near the Montparnasse station, and they discovered a café in the Boulevard Raspail which was frequented by artists and models, one or two of whom Mendel recognised as former habitués of the Paris Café. They were soon drawn into the artist world, and except that he went to the Louvre instead of to the National Gallery for peace and refreshment, Mendel often thought he might just as well be in London. There was the same feverish talk, the same abuse of successful artists, the same depreciation of old masters, but there was more body to the talk, and sometimes a Frenchman, finding speech useless with this shy, good-looking Jew, would make himself clear with what English he could muster and a rapid, skilful drawing. For the most part, however, he had to rely on Logan's paraphrase, until one day in the Boulevard St. Germain he ran into that Thompson, lamented by Jessie Petrie, the painter of stripes and triangles.

Thompson was a little senior to Mendel at the Detmold, had hardly spoken to him in the old days, but was now delighted to meet a familiar London face.

"I *am* glad!" he said. "Come and see my place. How are they all in London—poor old Calthrop and poor old Froitzheim? I should have killed myself if I'd stayed in London; nothing but talk and women, with work left to find its way in where it can. Here work comes first. I suppose they haven't even heard of Van Gogh in London?"

Mendel had to confess that he had never heard of Van Gogh.

"A Dutchman," explained Thompson, "and he cut off his ear and sent it to Gauguin. Ever heard of Gauguin?"

"No. But a man doesn't make himself a great artist by cutting off his ear."

"Van Gogh was a great artist before that. He killed himself: shot himself in his bed, and the doctor found him in bed smoking a pipe. He was quite happy, for he had done all he could."

That sounded more like it to Mendel, more like the deed of a warrior of the spirit.

"I'll show you," said Thompson, and they went round the galleries.

Mendel's head was nearly bursting when he came out. The riotous colour, the apparent neglect of drawing and abuse of form, the entire absence of tone and atmosphere, shocked him. He resented the wrench given to all his training, and he took Thompson to the Louvre to go back to Cranach and the early Italians. Thompson would not hear of them, and insisted on his spending over an hour with Poussin.

"I can see nothing in them. Good painting, good drawing, but dull, so dull! The flat, papery figures mean nothing."

"They mean everything to the picture," said Thompson, "and you have no right to go outside the picture. Poussin kept to his picture, and so must you if you are to understand him."

"I can see all that," said Mendel, "but he is dull. I can't help it, he bores me."

"It is pure art."

"Then I like it impure."

"You don't really. But you are all like that when you first come from London. You think that because a thing is different it must be wrong. Have you come over alone?"

"No. I'm with a man called Logan and his girl.

He is a great painter, or he will be one. Anyhow, he is alive and has ideas."

"Does he know about Van Gogh?"

"No; but he says the next great painter must come from England."

"Pooh! Whistler!" said Thompson in a tone of vast superiority. "Nous sommes bien loin de ça."

"Please don't talk French," said Mendel. "I don't understand a word."

"Whistler had good ideas," continued Thompson. "It is a pity he was not a better artist."

Mendel was beginning to feel bored. He did not understand this new painting for painting's sake, and did not want to understand it. To change the subject he said:—

"I nearly brought Jessie Petrie with me."

"I wish you had. She is a dear little girl, and I nearly sent for her the other day, but I've no use for the model now. It is perfectly futile trying to cram a living figure into a modern picture."

"I don't see why, if you can paint it."

"Really," said Thompson, "I don't see what you have come to Paris for, if you haven't come to learn something about painting. One wouldn't expect you to understand Picasso straight off, but any one who has handled paint ought to be able to grasp Van Gogh."

"He is trying for the impossible," grunted Mendel. "The important thing in art is art. I've come to Paris to have a good time."

"Oh! very well," said Thompson. "Why didn't you say so before? I'll show you round."

Mendel took Thompson round to his hotel and up to Logan's room, where, entering without knocking, they found Logan kneeling on the floor with Oliver in a swoon in his arms. He had opened her blouse at the neck and unlaced her corsage.

Mendel thought Oliver looked as though she was going to die, and his first idea was to run for the doctor.

"She'll come round," said Logan. "It's my fault. I was brutal to her. . . ." He nodded to Thompson. "How do you do?" and he covered up Oliver's large bosom.

She came to in a few moments, opened her eyes slowly, rolled them round, and came back to Logan, on whom she fixed a gaze of devouring love. She put up her arms and drew his head down and kissed his lips.

Mendel drew Thompson out into the corridor.

"She was shamming," he said.

"I don't think so," replied Thompson. "What has happened? Does he knock her about?"

"Not that I know of. They've not been together very long. They can't settle down."

"She's a fine woman," said Thompson.

They were called in again and found Oliver sitting up on the bed eating chocolates. She greeted Thompson with a queenly gesture, and clapped her hands when Mendel told her they were going out to see the sights.

"I'm sick of artists," she said. "I have quite enough of them in London. I wish to God you weren't an artist, Logan. You'd be quite a nice man if you worked for your living."

"Don't talk rubbish," mumbled Logan, who was subdued and curiously ashamed of himself. "If I were like that I should have a little dried-up wife and an enormous family, and you wouldn't have a look in."

"And a good job too!" cried Oliver, in her most provoking tone. "A good job too! I'd find some one who had a respect for me."

"D'you find Paris a good place to work in?" Logan turned to Thompson.

"I never knew the meaning of work till I came here. Ever heard of Rousseau?"

"Oh, yes," said Logan.

"I don't mean the writer, I mean . . ."

"I know, I know," said Logan nonchalantly. He could never admit ignorance of anything.

"A great painter," cried Thompson eagerly. "A very great painter. I tell you he brought Impressionism up sharp. They had overshot the mark, you know. Manet, Monet: they had overshot the mark."

Oliver began to scream at the top of her voice.

"Shut up!" said Logan. "You'll have us turned out."

"I don't care," she replied. "I don't care. I can't stand all this talk about painting."

"What do you want us to talk about?" said Mendel, tingling with exasperation. "Love? Three men and one woman can't talk about love."

"Well, I didn't come to Paris to sit in a dirty bedroom talking about pictures. I want to go out to see the streets and the shops and the funny people."

"For God's sake take us somewhere," said Logan.

Thompson, having ascertained that they had plenty of money, took them to Enghien by the river. Oliver was happy at once. She wanted to be amused and to be looked at, and as she was bouncing and rowdy she had her desire.

She made Logan play for her at the little horses, but, as she did not win, she was soon bored with it. Logan was bitten and could not tear himself away.

Mendel stayed with him and she disappeared with Thompson.

"I'm bound to win if I go on," said Logan. "There's a law of chances, you know, and I've always been lucky at these things. . . . It is so exciting, too."

He changed note after note into five-franc pieces, lost them all, and at last began to win a little; won, lost, won.

Mendel dragged him away from the table, protesting:—

"Come along. I have had enough. Do come along. We haven't had a chance to talk for days, and I hate these rooms with all the flashy, noisy people. . . . We can come back here and find the others. Let us go and find some fun that we can share, for this is deadly dull for me. Besides, we don't want to be stranded without money."

"But I'm winning. My luck is in."

He rushed back to the tables and lost—twice, upon which he allowed himself to be persuaded, and they went out into the air and sat on a terrace by the lake. Mendel produced cigarettes and they smoked in silence for some time. Logan looked pale and worn and was obviously smouldering with excitement.

"How amazingly different everything looks here," he said. "In London I always feel as though I had a thumb pressing into my brain. Everybody seems indifferent and hostile and everything I do is incongruous. I feel almost happy here. I should like to stay here. I told her so and she began to cry. I knocked her down. I couldn't stand her crying any more. I knocked her down and she fainted."

"She was shamming," thought Mendel, seeing vividly the scene in the bedroom. "He did not hurt her. She was shamming."

"I feel a brute," said Logan, "and yet I'm glad. I'm tremendously glad. I want to sing. I want to get drunk. I'm tremendously glad. It has settled something. I'm her master. She was getting on my nerves. She won't do that any more. Ha! Ha!"

"Why don't you get rid of her?" asked Mendel. "Leave her here. Come back with me to-morrow."

"Don't be a silly child," said Logan patronisingly. "I love her. I couldn't live without her now, not for a single day. I could no more do without her than I could do without the clothes on my back. I tell you she's an inspiration. If she left me I should lay down my brush for ever. She's a religion—all the religion I've got."

"I can't imagine stopping my work for any woman," said Mendel.

"Ah! that's because you don't know what a woman can mean. You can't know while you are young."

Mendel's nerves had been throbbing in sympathy with his friend, but suddenly all that place was filled with a soft, clear light and a bright music, the colour and the scent of flowers, the soft murmur of flowing water, the whisper of the wind in leafy trees, and his heart ached and grew big and seemed to burst into a thousand, thousand rivulets of love, searching out every corner of his senses, cleansing his eyes, sharpening his hearing, refining every sense, so that the scene before him—the white tables, the white-aproned waiters, the green trees, the soft evening sky, the softer reflection of it in the water—was exquisite and magical and full of a mysterious power that permeated even Logan's brutal revelation and made it worthy of beauty. . . . And this mysterious power he knew was love, and she, the girl for whom it had arisen from the depths, was far away in England, thinking of him, perhaps, regretting him, perhaps, but knowing nothing of the beauty she had denied. . . .

Mendel was astonished to find tears in his eyes, trembling on his lashes, trickling down his cheeks.

"What a baby you are!" said Logan. "You can't have me all to yourself."

His divination was true. Lacking its true object, Mendel's love had concentrated upon his friend, with whom he longed to walk freely in the enchanted world of art, to be as David and Jonathan. Indeed, Logan's state of torment was to him as a wound got in battle, over which he gave himself up to lamentation, so single and deep and pure that it obscured even the impulse of his love. He longed to rid his friend of this devouring passion that was consuming him and thrusting in upon his energy, but because his friend called it love, he respected it and bore with it.

"How good it is, this life out of doors!" exclaimed Logan, lolling back in his chair.

"I don't know," replied Mendel. "I think it is too deliberate, too organised. I prefer London streets. There is nothing in the world to me to compare with London streets. Nature is too beautiful. A tree in blossom, a garden full of flowers, a round hill with the shadow of the clouds over them, move me too much. Left alone with them I should go mad. I must have human nature if I am to live and work. I only want nature, just as I only want God, through human nature."

"By Jove! you hit the nail on the head sometimes, my boy. That is true for all of us. It is what I meant when I said that Oliver was a religion to me."

"I don't mean women or individuals," protested Mendel. "I mean human nature in the lump. It may be very poor stuff, stupid and foolish and vulgar, but it is all we've got, and one lives in it and through it."

"That is all very well while you are young," said Logan, "but you have to individualise it when you are older. One person becomes a point of contact. You can't just float through humanity like an apparition."

Mendel had lost the thread of his argument, though not his confidence in its truth.

"That is not what I meant," he said, "and I don't see how a person could be just a point of contact."

"All I know is that Oliver is such a point of contact to me, and I know that unless art is inspired with some such feeling as you have described, all the technical skill and all the deft trickery in the world won't make it more than a sop for fools or an interesting survival of mediævalism. That is why I think you are going to be so valuable. You have so little to unlearn. You have only to shake off the most antiquated religion in the world and you can look at life and human nature without prejudice, while I have constantly to be uprooting all sorts of prejudices in favour of certain ways of living, morally and socially."

Mendel was beginning to feel comfortable and easy, for while his mind worked furiously he could rarely express what he thought, and Logan in his talk often came near enough to it to afford him some relief and to urge him on to renewed digging in the recesses of his mind. It was a vast comfort to him to find that there were other vital thoughts besides that of Morrison, and that for ecstasy he was not entirely dependent upon her. Warmed up by his confidence in Logan, he resolved to tell him about the girl and the vast change she had wrought in his life.

"I used to think," he said, "that if I stayed among my own people I could work my way through the poverty and the dirt and the Jewishness of it all to art. When she came I knew that it was impossible. She had something that I needed, something that the Jews do not know, or never have known. It is not my poverty that denies it to me, for if the poor Jews do not know a good thing, the rich Jews certainly do not, for the rich Jews are rubbish who stroke the Christians with one hand and rob them with the other. It is something that she knows almost without knowing it herself."

Logan smiled.

"I am not a fool about her," cried Mendel. "She is not particularly beautiful to me. There is only one line in her face that I think beautiful, from the cheekbone to the jaw. I am not a fool about her, but I had almost given the Christian world up in despair. It seemed to me so bad, so inhuman, so hollow, so full of plump, respectable thieves. The simple thieves and bullies of my boyhood seemed to me infinitely preferable. And I had met some of the most important people in the Christian world: all empty and callous and lascivious. And the unimportant people were good enough, but dull, so dull. . . . Then comes this little girl. She is like Cranach's Eve among monkeys. She becomes at once to me what Cranach's wife must have been to him. He painted her as child, girl, and woman. The chattering apes matter to me no more. The Christian world is no longer empty. It is still lascivious and greedy, soft and ill-conditioned, puffy and stale, but it is suddenly full of meaning, of beauty, of a joy which, because I am a Jew, I cannot understand."

"Give it up," growled Logan; "give it up. Paint her portrait and let her go. You are a born painter. To a painter women are either paintable or nothing. For God's sake don't go losing yourself in philosophy."

"It is not philosophy!" cried Mendel indignantly. "It is what I feel."

"It will probably end in a damned good picture," retorted Logan. "Why not be content with that?"

"Because it will not answer what I want to know, and because I feel that there is something in the Jews, the real Jews, that she does not understand either. And she is not a fool. She has a mind. She has a deep character. She is strong, and she can get the better of me. She is secret and she is cruel."

Logan gave his fat chuckle.

"She is just an English girl with all the raw feeling bred out of her. She is true to type: impulsive without being sensual, kind without being affectionate; and she would let you or any man go to hell rather than give up anything she has been brought up to believe in or admit to her life anything that was strange, unfamiliar, and not good form, like yourself. . . . Give it up, give it up. You are only taking it seriously because you have been irresistible so far and it is the first setback you have received."

"I will not give it up," said Mendel, setting his teeth. Then he laughed because the lights had gone up and the scene was gay and amusing, and he wanted to plunge into the merry crowd of Parisians and pleasure-seekers, to move among them and to come in contact with the women, to watch the men strutting to please them, to delight in the procession of excited faces, to taste the flavour of humanity which is always and everywhere the same, rich, astonishing, comforting, satisfying in its variety.

Oliver and Thompson returned with their hands full of trinkets, toys, and pretty paper decorations which they had bought or won at games of chance and skill. She sat on Logan's knee and insisted on wreathing him with paper streamers, which he removed as fast as she placed them on his head.

"Do! do!" she cried. "Do let go for once and let us all be gay. Oh! I do love this place, with the band playing, and the lights in the water, and the wonderful deep blue sky. Why don't we have a sky like that in London? Do let us come here every year for the summer. Thompson says painters have to come to Paris if they want to be any good."

"I've been telling her about Van Gogh," said Thompson.

"So that's what's gone to your head!" growled Logan, patting her cheek. "He's been talking to you about painting, has he?"

"Yes. He's a nice man, and doesn't treat me as if I was a perfect fool."

She darted a mischievous glance at Mendel, who started under it as though he had been stung. He was horrified at the depth of his dislike of her, and he remembered with disgust her full, coarse bosom exposed as she lay in her calculated swoon. . . . How good it had been while she was gone with that fool Thompson, who suited her so perfectly, that chattering ape, with his talk of Van Gogh and Gauguin and "abstract art," who stood now coveting her with shining eyes and fatuously smiling lips.

"I'm not good enough for some people," she said. "When I come into the room there is silence."

"Oh, shut up!" said Logan. "Let's go and have dinner and get back to Paris. I'm sick of this cardboard place, where there is nothing but pleasure."

They had an excellent dinner, during which Oliver never stopped chattering and Mendel never once opened his lips. His thoughts were away in England, in his studio with his work, and in the country with Morrison, and he struggled to bring them together in his mind. How could Logan love Oliver and keep her apart from his work? Two such passions must infallibly seek each other out and come to grips. They must come together or be flung violently apart. . . . Passions were to him as real as persons; they had individualities, needs, desires; they were entities insisting upon their right to existence; they must express themselves, must make their impression upon the circumambient world.

He became critical of Logan, though he hated to be so. Logan stood to him for adventure and freedom, independence and courage. It was incomprehensible to him that Logan should take Oliver seriously. She was the woman for a holiday, for a wild outburst of lawlessness, not for the morning and the evening and the day between.

"Oh, do cheer up, Kühler! You are like a death's-head at a feast."

He looked at her with a piercing glance which silenced her. No: she was no holiday woman. She was the woman for a drab, drudging life, with no other colour or joy in it than her own animal warmth. She was like Rosa, made for just such a dreary, simple, devoted fool as Issy. What could she do with a strong passion? She could only absorb it like a sponge, and nothing could kindle her. Just a drab; just a sponge.

Thinking so, his dislike of her grew into a hatred so passionate that he desired to know more of her, to watch her, to beget a clear idea of her. He went and sat by her side and teased her, while she teased him and told him he was the prettiest boy she had ever seen.

"That night in the Tube I thought you were the prettiest boy I ever saw, and I was quite disappointed when Logan came to speak to me instead of you."

"I would never have taken you from the shop," he said. "I would have taken you to my studio, and perhaps I would have painted you, but I would have sent you back to the shop."

"I wouldn't have gone, so there!" she said. "What would you have done then?"

"I should have turned you out."

"Oh! Would you? Filthy brute! If I'm good enough for one thing I'm good enough for another. Do you hear that, Logan? He would have turned me out!"

"You leave Kühler alone," said Logan. "You'll never understand him, if you try for a thousand years."

"Turned me out?" muttered Oliver. "Heuh! I like that. He'd turn me out and get another girl in! I'll not have any of those tricks from you, Logan."

"You can talk about them when I begin them," he replied.

She turned from Mendel to Thompson and soon had him soft in her snares.

"She would like to do that with me," thought Mendel, "and she hates me because she knows she cannot."

They returned to Paris by bus all sleepy and a little drunk. Oliver leaned her head on Logan's shoulder and dozed, smiling to herself, while Thompson, sitting by her side, fingered her sleeve.

They were carried far beyond the point where they should have descended, and finding themselves on the boulevards, they woke up to the liveliness of the Parisian night, and Oliver refused to go home.

Thompson suggested the cabarets, and they went from one dreary vicious hole to another until they came on one where a party of Americans were doing in Paris as the Parisians do. They had brought on a number of *cocottes* from the Bal Tabarin, and were drinking, shouting, dancing. Thompson led Oliver into the mêlée, and soon she was drinking, shouting, dancing with the rest.

Mendel was horrified and disgusted. There was no zest in the riot. It was a piece of deliberate, cold-blooded bestialisation. He trembled with rage, and turned to Logan, who was sitting with a sickly smile on his face:—

"You ought not to let her," he cried—almost moaned. "If she were my woman I would not let her. I would kill any man who laid hands on her like that. She is not a prostitute. I would not let my woman be a prostitute."

But Logan did not move. He sat with his sickly smile on his face. He was drunk and could not move.

Unable to bear the scene any longer, Mendel rushed away, jumped into a taxi, and drove back to the hotel, swearing that he would go back to London the next day. He would write and tell Logan that he must get rid of Oliver or no longer be his friend. She was a poisonous drab. She would be the ruin of his friend.

An hour or two later Logan came back. He was very white, and his hair was dank, and there was a cold sweat on his face.

"My God!" he said, "Kühler! Are you awake? I don't know where she is. I went to sleep. I was so tired, and there was such a row with those blasted Americans. I went to sleep and awoke to find a nigger shaking me and the place empty. . . . Where does Thompson live? Do you know?"

"Off the Boulevard Raspail. I went there to look at his rubbishy pictures. I think I could find the way. Are you going to kill him?"

"I want to find her," said Logan. "I must find her. It is killing me to think of her lost in Paris. I must find her. I can't sleep without her. I must find her."

He hardly seemed to know what he was saying.

"Come along then," said Mendel. "I think I can find where Thompson lives."

It was not far. They walked along the deserted boulevard under the new white, florid buildings, and turned into an impasse.

"That's it," said Mendel. "Impasse. I remember that. A tall, thin house with a big yellow door. Here it is."

They knocked until the yellow door swung mysteriously open and then ran upstairs to the top floor.

Thompson came blinking into the passage.

"Where's Oliver? Where's Logan's girl?"

Mendel put up his fist to hit him in the eye.

"I put her into a taxi and sent her home. The Americans took us on to another place. They were a jolly lot. A terrific place they took us to. There were negresses dancing and a South Seas girl who said Gauguin brought her back. . . . Oliver's all right. I put her in a taxi and sent her back."

"You're a liar!" shouted Logan. "She's in there."

He rushed in, while Mendel put his arms round Thompson and laid him neatly on the floor. In a moment Logan was out again.

"You're a shocking bad painter," he said to Thompson, "but she isn't there."

They left the house and walked slowly back to the hotel. Logan clung to Mendel's arm, saying:—

"It's my fault. She said if ever I knocked her about she'd clear out. Do you mind walking about with me? I couldn't go to bed. I couldn't sleep."

All night they walked about; going back to the hotel every half hour to see if she was there, talking of anything and everything, even politics, to keep Logan's mind from the fixed horrible idea that had taken possession of it. They saw the sun come out, and the workers hurrying along the streets, and the waiters in the cafés push up the heavy iron shutters that had only been pulled down an hour or two before, and the market women with their baskets, and the tramcars glide and jolt along, the shops open and the girls go chattering to their work through the long, leisurely Parisian day.

They returned at eight and had breakfast. At half-past nine Oliver appeared, smiling and serene.

"We did have fun last night! You missed something, I tell you."

"Where have you been?" cried Logan. "I've been looking for you all night."

"What a fool you are! I can look after myself."

"Where have you been?"

She faced him with a bold stare and said:—

"I got home about half-past two, and I took another room, partly because I didn't want to disturb you, and partly—you know why."

"What number was your room?"

"Forty-four."

From where they sat Mendel could see the keyboard in the concierge's lodge. There were only forty rooms in the hotel.

"Have you had breakfast?" asked Logan, forcing himself to believe her.

"Hours ago. In bed," she replied. "I paid for it and the bed."

"Why did you do that?" he snapped.

She caught Mendel's eyes fixed on her, eager to see her trapped, and she smiled insolently as she replied:—

"I thought it would be a good joke if I let you think I had been out all night. But you look such a wreck that I don't think you could see a joke. . . . What are we going to do to-day?"

"We are going home," said Logan.

BOOK THREE: THE PASSING OF YOUTH

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CHAPTER I

EDWARD TUFNELL

A WRETCHED journey home, a miserable journey. There had been a high wind, leaving a heavy swell, and Mendell shared the feelings of his brother-in-law, Moscowitsch, concerning the sea. It made him ill, and he never wished to see it again.

Oliver sat with her eyes closed while Logan held her hand and whispered to her. The boat was crowded, for it was the first to make the crossing for two days. Detestable people, detestable sea, detestable evil-smelling boat! . . . How lightly they had undertaken the trip to Paris! Only seven hours! But what hours!

Mendel's disgust endured until they reached London. This was home to him, and never, never again would he travel. The discomfort of it was too odious, the shock to his habits too great. In London he did at least know what to avoid, while in Paris there was no knowing when he might be plunged into a dreary, glittering place full of prostitutes and Americans.

He was glad to part with Logan and Oliver. They had so much to settle with each other that he felt he was an unnecessary third. Paris had done violence to their relationship. They had gone there light of heart; they had returned oppressed and entangled. . . . And in London it was raining; but that was good, because familiar. It was good to go out into the friendly streets and to see them shining like black rivers, and to see the people hurrying under their dripping umbrellas and the women with their skirts up to their knees.

He seemed to have been away a very long time, and yet Paris seemed very far off too, an unreal memory, like a place of which he had read or seen in photographs. He was glad when he mounted a bus and knew that it was bearing him towards his own people.

Golda was very excited. She had had a letter from Harry, who had seen his brother in Paris, but had been too shy to speak to him because of his friends.

"You should have gone to see your brother," she said.

"How could I?" asked Mendel. "I did not know where he was."

"You speak Yiddish. You could have found him. He has done very well, but he is coming home to us. He does not like to live away from his people, and he says England is best."

And Mendel thought that England was indeed best. For him, then, England meant his mother's kitchen, with its odd decorations from Tottenham Court Road, its dresser crammed with gilded china and fringed with cut green paper, its collection of his early pictures, almost all hanging crooked, and the hard wooden chair in which Golda sat all day long with her hands on her stomach, dreaming and brooding of her life, which through all her hardships had been sweet because of her beautiful child whom everybody loved and spoiled, as she herself loved and spoiled him because he was not like other children.

England was best because it could contain that peace and that beauty, and there was nothing in England to harm it or in envy to destroy it.

Mendel could understand his brother wanting to come back to it; for he, too, from all his adventures, returned to its simplicity for strength and comfort.

Moscowitsch came in with a Jewish paper. He was in a terrible state of anger and hatred. His eyes flashed and his nostrils quivered as he read out how a Jew in Russia had been accused of killing a Christian boy for his blood, and how over a thousand Jews had been massacred on the instigation of the police.

"It grows worse and worse," he said. "The Jews do not kill. It is the Christians who lust for blood. It is the Christians who are so wicked and dishonest that, when they must be found out, they say it is the Jews, or that the Jews are more wicked than they. It is impossible. But England is good to the Jews. England must send soldiers to Russia or the Jews will be all murdered."

"Yes, it is bad in Russia," said Golda, nodding her head. "But life is bad everywhere for good people. Only in England one is left alone."

"Well, Mr. Artist!" said Moscowitsch genially. "Made your fortune yet?"

"No," replied Mendel; "but I have been to Paris for my holidays and I stayed in a hotel. Three of us spent twenty pounds."

"So?" said Moscowitsch, impressed. "Have you made it up with the Birnbaum, then?"

"No."

"That is not the way to get on, to quarrel with money."

"If he wants money," said Golda, "he can always get it. What more do you want? There are some letters for you, Mendel."

He opened his letters, and had the satisfaction of telling Moscowitsch that he was asked to paint a portrait for thirty pounds.

"Who is it?" asked Moscowitsch. "A lord?" He had an idea that only lords had their portraits painted by hand.

"That's better," he said. "That's better than painting those pictures that nobody wants. You paint what they ask you and you'll soon make your fortune, and be able to give your mother dresses covered with beads and tickets for the theatre and china ornaments. And you can be thankful you don't live in Russia. They wouldn't let you be an artist there. If you became a student they would send you off to Siberia and you would die in the snow."

It was the first time Moscowitsch had spoken to him since the breach with Birnbaum, and Mendel was at his ease with him again, and glad to be with his people. He knew that Moscowitsch was greatly attached to Golda, and had more than once urged his being taken away from his painting and put to some useful trade.

"Oh! I shall very soon succeed," he said boastfully. "This is only a beginning. You keep an eye on that paper of yours. You will find something else to read besides what Russia does to the Jews. You will see what England does for a Jew when he has talent and honesty."

"They made Disraeli a lord," said Moscowitsch.

"I shall be something much better than a lord."

"They only make painters R. A."

"I shall be much better than that," said Mendel.

"It is like old times," laughed Golda, "to hear him boasting."

Mendel opened another letter. It was an invitation to become a member of an exhibiting club which considered itself exclusive.

"I have been invited to become a member of a club."

That settled Moscowitsch. A club to him was proof of success and social distinction. He and his wife had made the acquaintance of a member of the music-hall profession who had two clubs, and they counted him a feather in their caps. To have a member of a club in the family was almost overwhelming, and he forgot the sorrows of the Jews in Russia.

The portrait commission was from Edward Tufnell, who had lately married and had been adopted as a candidate for Parliament for a northern constituency. Good earnest soul that he was, he regarded himself as responsible for launching Mendel upon the world, and once he had assumed a responsibility he never forgot it. Nothing made any difference to him. He had heard tales of the boy's wildness, but he accepted responsibility for that too, read up the histories of men of genius for precedent, and acknowledged the inevitability of the flying of sparks from the collision of a strong individuality and the habits of the world.

He had always intended to give his protégé a lift, and had tried in vain to badger his father and his uncle, partners in a huge woollen manufactory, into having their portraits painted. They preferred to sink their money in men with reputations. He did not see how Mendel could acquire a reputation except by giving him work to do. On the other hand, he shrank from what he considered the vanity of having his own portrait painted, but his charmingly pretty wife gave him the opportunity he desired.

Therefore he invited Mendel to his house in the dales to stay until the picture was finished.

A day or two later and Mendel was in the train, being whirled North through the dull, rolling Midlands and the black, smirched valleys of the West Riding. The gloomy sky filled him with terror. At first he thought there was going to be a storm, but there seemed to be no life in the sky, and its strangeness oppressed him. The people in the train spoke a language which seemed almost as foreign as French, and when the train darted through forests of smoking chimney-stacks and he looked down into the grimy, trough-like streets, he was dismayed to think that here were depths of misery compared with which the East End was as a holiday ground. This, too, was England, and he had said that England was best. He remembered Jews in the East End who had fled from the North and said they would rather go back to Russia than return to the tailoring shops and the boot factories. So this vile, busy blackness was the North!

For some mysterious reason it made him think of Logan and Oliver, and the thought of them filled him with an added uneasiness. He had not thought of them once since the trip to Paris, and now he felt bound to them, and that they were a weight upon him. They stood out vividly against the murky, lifeless sky. He could see them standing hand in hand, smiling a little foolishly, and a physical tremor shot through him as he thought of the contact of their two hands, thrilling together, pressing together, to tell of their terrible need of each other. . . . . This man and this woman. Mendel was haunted by the images of all the couples he knew, and they passed before him like a shadowy procession of the damned, all hand in hand, across the lifeless sky, all shadowy except Logan and Oliver, and then two others, his father and his mother; but they were not hand in hand. They were seated side by side, like two statues, and behind them the lifeless sky broke and opened to show the infinite blue space beyond the clouds.

He had changed at the darkest of the chimneyed towns, and the shabby local train went grinding and puffing through a tunnel into a vast green valley. At the first station he saw Edward Tufnell on the platform. He had changed a good deal, and was no longer the lanky, earnest youth of the Settlement, but his eyes still had their steady, serene expression and their sunny, beautiful smile.

He flung up his hand as he saw Mendel, smiled, and came fussily, as though he were meeting the Prime Minister himself. He insisted on carrying Mendel's bag and canvases and made him feel small and young again, as he used to when he went trotting along by Edward's side on his way to the French class.

"It's a long journey," said Edward. "You must be tired."

"Oh no! I don't mind any journey as long as I don't have to cross the sea."

"It is only two miles now."

They climbed into a dogcart and drove, for the most part at a walk, up a long, winding road that crept like a worm along the flanks of a huge hill.

"Glorious country!" said Edward. "I love it. The South doesn't seem to me to be country at all—just a huge park. One is afraid to walk on the grass. But here there is room and freedom. One understands why the North is Liberal."

"It is too big for me," replied Mendel. "But then I can't get used to the country. I'm not myself in it. I feel in it as though I were on the edge of the world and in danger of falling off. Yes. The country seems dangerous to me, and I could never walk along a road at night."

"How odd that is!" laughed Edward. "If I am ever afraid it is in the town. The vast masses of people do really terrify me sometimes, when I think of governing them all."

"They can look after themselves," said Mendel simply.

Over the shoulder of the hill they came on a grey stone house with a walled garden. Edward turned in at the gate, flicked his horse into a trot up the steep drive, and drew up by the front door, in which was standing a dainty little lady in a mauve cotton gown and a wide Leghorn straw hat.

"Here he is, my dear!" said Edward. "My wife, Kühler."

"I'm so glad you could come," said the little lady. "My husband has told me so much about you."

"Not half what he could tell if he only knew," thought Mendel.

"I'm afraid it is a very long way for you to come," she said, leading him into the house while Edward drove round to the stables. "It is very good of you. We are very quiet here, but you can do just as you like, and I shall always be ready for you when you want me."

She had a very charming voice that seemed to bubble with happiness, and she had the air of being surprised at herself for being so happy. The house was pervaded with her atmosphere, fragrant and good, and every corner seemed to be full of surprise, every piece of furniture looked astonished at finding itself in its place—so perfectly in its place. This fragrant perfection was the more amazing as the outside of the house was more than a little grim, and the hill behind it was dark and ominous, while several of the trees were blasted and chapped with the wind.

Mendel had never seen such a house, and when Edward took him up to his room he almost wept with delight at the comfort and sweetness of it all. There was a fire burning in the grate, by the side of which was a huge easy chair. Flowered chintz curtains were drawn across the windows, and the same gay chintz covered the bed. On the wash-hand-stand was a shining brass can of hot water. There were books by the bedside, the carpet was of a thick pile, and the furniture was old and exquisite. . . . He was filled with delight and gratitude.

"Yes," he thought, "England is best! Comfortable England."

And when Edward showed him the big tiled bathroom he had a shiver of dismay, and thought what a dirty, uncouth fellow he was to come among these exquisite people.

Mary Tufnell put him at his ease at once and encouraged him to talk about himself. He was frank and gay and amusing, and told her about his adventures and many of his troubles, and even ventured once or twice upon scabrous details.

"He is a darling," she said to Edward. "But how he must have suffered. He is such a boy, but sometimes he seems to me the oldest person I have ever met."

"You must remember that he is a Jew," said Edward.

"He doesn't let you forget it," replied she.

The portrait was begun the next day. Mendel took a business-like view of his visit. He was there to paint and to make thirty pounds. Every moment that his hostess could spare he seized upon. He painted her in her mauve cotton and Leghorn hat and would not talk while he worked.

When the light was gone he was ready for any entertainment they might propose. He did not find either of them particularly interesting, and their unfailing kindness wearied him not a little. They were so invariably good in every thought, word, and deed. It seemed impossible for them to fail. There was no combination of circumstances which they could not surmount with their smiling patience. . . . He thought of them as two people walking along on either side of a road, smiling across it at each other. Nothing joined them. They had never met. There had been no collision. He had overtaken her on the road and had taken her step, her pace. . . . They had just that air. Dear Edward had fallen in with her by the wayside, and she had smiled at him and he was content and held for life. To their mutual grave astonishment she would have children, and her smile would become a little sad, and with the children she would be an ideal to Edward, like the little Italian Madonnas of whom he had so many photographs all over the house. And between them on the road would march the brave procession of life—kings and beggars, priests and prostitutes, artists and peasants, chariots, and strange engines of peace and war; but they would see nothing of it: they would see only each other, and they would smile and go smiling to the grave.

Mendel was at his ease with them and very happy, but suddenly out of nowhere there would arise, as it were, a great stench that pricked his nostrils and set him longing for London. And he would think of Logan and Oliver and ache to be with them, so that he knew that he was bound to them in the flesh. They were embarked upon a great adventure in which he must be with them to the end, for Logan was his friend, with whom he must share even the deepest bitterness. With Edward he could share nothing at all, for Edward was absurdly, incredibly innocent, content to smile by the wayside.

He wrote to Logan and Oliver and told them how he was longing to be with them, and how the country filled him with childish fears, and how Paris seemed a thousand miles away and its adventures a thousand years ago. And he was hurt because they did not at once reply.

He received two letters one morning. Logan wrote telling him he ought not to waste his time over portraits, and that he must come back to London soon, because the autumn was to see their triumph: nothing about himself, nothing about Oliver. Mendel was disappointed: nobody ever really answered his letters, into which he flung all his feeling.

His other letter was from Morrison. His first letter from her. He knew her hand, though he had never seen it before—round, big, simple. He kept her letter until his day's work was done, and then he went into the garden to read it. There was an arbour at the end of a mossy walk which led to a crag above a little waterfall. Out of the crag grew a mountain ash, brilliant in berry. This was the most beautiful spot in the garden, and so he chose it for reading the letter.

"I want you to forgive me for being so foolish. I want to try again. I hate being beaten, and I think it was only my stupidity that beat me. I have been thinking of you all the time, and I have been troubled about you. What people said had nothing at all to do with it. I admire you more than I can say, and I have been very foolish.

"It has been a lovely summer. I have been working hard and feel hopeless about it. Please don't ask to see my work. While I am at it I am wondering all the time what you are doing.

"I am to be allowed to come back to London in October. There is no reason why you should not write to me."

She was there with him, by his side, under the glowing rowan-tree, gazing down at the little white waterfall dashing so merrily down into the pebbled beck. She was there with him, and his blood sang in his veins and his mind began to work, pounding along as it had not done these many weeks. . . . Weeks? Years—more than a lifetime.

He went back to his picture and thought it very, very bad. Edward and his wife came in and looked at it dubiously.

"Of course," said Edward, "it is a very jolly picture, but I don't think you have caught all her charm."

"But the painting of the hat is wonderful," said Mary.

"What do I care?" thought Mendel. "It is you—you as you are, smiling, eternally smiling over your little clean, comfortable happiness, three parts of which you have bought, with your servants and your flowers and your bathroom."

In a day or two he was being whirled back to London, shouting every now and then from sheer exuberance—thirty pounds in his pocket, October to look forward to: October, when London shook off its summer listlessness; October, when She would return; and until October he would run with his eyes on the trail of the burning, creeping passion that bound him to Logan and Oliver.

CHAPTER II

THE CAMPAIGN OPENS

HE reached London in the afternoon, and as soon as it was evening went to Camden Town to find Logan. Only Oliver was in. She was sitting in the window smoking. There had been a tea-party, and the floor was littered with cups, plates of bread and butter and cakes, fragments of biscuit, some of which had been trodden on.

Mendel surveyed this litter ruefully, and he said:—

"Why don't you wash up?"

"Logan said he would. I washed up after breakfast. I'm not a servant, and he keeps on promising to have some one in to help."

"Will you wash up if I help you?"

"No, thanks. Logan's got to do it."

"Who has been to tea?"

"Oh! A funny lot. Some of Logan's fools who think he is a great man."

"He is a great man," said Mendel.

"Heuh! You try living with him. What's the good of being a great man if you don't make any money? It's all very well for Calthrop to live like a pig. He makes money and can do what he likes."

"If you don't like it you can always clear out."

"Where to? Eh? To go the round of the studios and oblige people like you? Not much! It isn't as if I was married to him. I can't make him keep me. Besides, he wouldn't let me go. If I went he would run after me. I suppose you hadn't thought of that, Mr. Kühler. You don't know what it is to care for anybody. I'd like to see some one play you and play you, and then turn you down. That would teach you a lesson, that would."

"What's the matter with you?"

"I'm not going to stand it any longer," she said. "I'm not going to be put on one side like dirt while you go on with your conceited talk. You're both so conceited you don't know how to hold yourselves. I'm a woman, and I stand for something in the world. A woman is more important than the biggest picture that was ever painted."

"It depends upon the woman."

"All right, then. *I'm* more important. You talk about Logan keeping me. He can consider himself damned lucky I stay with him."

"Oh! you're both in luck," snapped Mendel, and he sat down and refused to say another word.

Oliver began to whistle and then to hum. She fidgeted in her chair. She thought she had come off rather well in the sparring match. She had been dreading Mendel's return, for since the Paris adventure she had been asserting herself, as she called it, beating Logan down, bewildering him with her extraordinary sweetness and cajolery and sudden outbursts of fury. Both had agreed to bury the memory of the last night in Paris, but the thoughts of both were centred upon it. She rejoiced that she had served him out, but she had been stirred to a degree that alarmed her. Her former condition of lazy sensual security had been broken, and she dreaded Logan's jealousy. She knew that she was not his equal in force, but she set herself to overcome him with cunning. His force would spend itself. She knew that. She must then bind him fast with tricks and lures, rouse the curiosity of his senses and keep it unsatisfied.

She had succeeded wonderfully. Logan crumbled and turned soft and sugary under her arts, and only one impulse in him resisted her—his love for Mendel; and through that love his passion for art. Therefore she dreaded and hated Mendel's return.

Presently she ceased to hum. She thought suddenly that perhaps it had been a mistake to meet Mendel with hostility.

"I say, Kühler, do give us one of your cigarettes. These are awful muck."

He threw his cigarette-case over to her.

"Did you have a good time up North?"

"Yes."

"I come from there, you know. Logan was furious with you for going. He is really very fond of you, you know."

"I don't need you to tell me that."

"He's very excited just now. He keeps talking about the artistic revolution and the twentieth century, and all that, you know. He has been reading a book called 'John Christopher,' and keeps on reading it aloud until I'm sick of it. I believe he thinks he is like Christopher, though I'm sure he's not, because Christopher could never see a joke. It is all about women, one after another, just left anyhow. It doesn't sound like a story to me at all."

"It sounds true," said Mendel, not paying much attention to what she said.

To his intense relief Logan came in with a frame under his arm.

"Hullo!" he said. "Got back? How did you like the swells?"

"They were good people," replied Mendel, "and wonderfully peaceful. I don't think I appreciated it enough while I was there, but it seems very clear and beautiful to me now."

"Portrait any good?"

"No."

Logan put down his frame and without a word to Oliver proceeded to wash up the tea-things. She stayed in her chair in the window and hummed.

To Mendel his friend seemed altered. He had lost his good-humour and something of his happy recklessness, and he was more concentrated and full of a wary self-consciousness.

He came out of the bedroom when the washing up was done and flung himself on the divan, stretched himself out, and said:—

"I'm tired; done up. Lord! What fools there are in the world! No more portraits for you, my boy; at least, not this side of thirty. Ten years' good solid work ahead of you."

He laughed.

"I told Cluny he must hurry up or you would slide off into portrait-painting. Dealers hate the mere sound of the word. He is going to hurry up. I've played you for all I am worth, and Cluny is in my pocket. Oh! I'm a man of destiny, I am."

A snort and a giggle came from Oliver. Logan sat up.

"Leave the room!" he said.

"Shan't."

"Leave the room. I want to talk to Kühler."

"Talk away then. I shan't listen."

Logan walked over to her, seized her by the arms, and pushed her into the bedroom and locked the door. It was done very quickly and dexterously, as though it were a practised manœuvre.

"I'm finding out how to treat her," he said. "Quiet firmness does the trick."

He met Mendel's eyes fixed on him in horrified inquiry and turned sharply away.

"It isn't as bad as it looks," he said. "The fact is, women aren't fit for liberty and an artist ought to have nothing to do with them. But what can a man do? . . . What were we talking about?"

"Cluny."

"Oh yes! He wants the exhibition to be the first fortnight in November. Can you be ready by then? It must be a turning-point in art, the beginning of big things. I know myself enough to realise that it is doubtful if I shall ever be a great creative artist, but I shall be the Napoleon of the new movement—the soldier and the organiser of the revolution in art. And it won't be confined to art; it will spread through everything. Art will be the central international republic from which the commonwealths which will take the place of the present vulgar capitalistic nations will be inspired. What do you think of that for an idea?"

"Stick to art," said Mendel. "I know nothing about the rest."

"Do you remember my saying that the music-hall was all that was left of old England? I did not know how true it was. England has become one vast music-hall, with everybody with any talent or brains scrambling to top the bill. It runs through everything—art, politics, the press, literature, social reform, women's suffrage, local government; and the people who top the bill can't be dislodged, just like the poor old crocks on the halls, who come on and give the same show they were giving twenty years ago, and get applause instead of rotten eggs because the British public is so rotten with sentiment and so stupid that it can't tell when a man has lost his talent. Please one generation in England and its grandchildren will applaud you, though everything about you is changed except your name. The result is, of course, that no talent is ever properly developed. A man reaches the point where he can please enough people to make a living, and he sticks there. Now, I ask you, is that a state of things which a self-respecting artist can accept?"

"No," said Mendel. "No."

"Well. It has to be altered. And who is to alter it if not the painters, who are less in contact with the general public than any other artists? Painters had a comfortable time last century, living on the North-country municipal councils, but that is all over and we are reduced to poops like Tysoe. There are any number of them, if one only took the trouble to dig them up, but they're no good. I've lived on them for the last ten years, and they're no good. You might as well squeeze your paints into the sink and turn on the tap for all the flicker of appreciation you get out of them. Then there are the snobs, the semi-demimondaines of the political set; but they are a seedy lot, with the minds and the interests of chorus-girls. You might whip up a little excitement at Oxford and Cambridge, but it would only vanish as soon as the young idiots came in contact with London and fell in love. . . . No. Behind the scenes of the music-hall is no good. We must make a direct onslaught on the general public. They must be taught that there is such a thing as art and that there are men devoted to the disinterested development of their talents—men who have no desire to top the bill or to make five hundred a week; men who recognise that art is European, universal, the invisible fabric in which human life is contained, and are content, like simple workmen, to keep it in repair."

"I don't know," said Mendel, "if my brother-in-law Moscowitsch is typical, but he regards art which does not make money as a waste of time."

"Oh! He is a Jew and uneducated. That's where Tolstoi went so wrong. He confused the simplicity of art with the simplicity of the peasant, the dignity of the unsophisticated with the dignity that is achieved through sophistication. It may seem absurd to talk of bringing about anything so big through little Cluny, but it is not only possible, it is inevitable. The staleness of London cannot go on, and Paris seemed just the same to me. Stagnation is intolerable. There must come a movement towards freedom and a grander gesture, and the only free people are the painters. They are the only people whose work has not become servile and vulgarised. Through them lies the natural outlet. . . . Oh! I have been thinking and thinking, and I thank God we met before you had been spoiled by success or I had been ruined by my rotten swindling life—though that has had its advantages too, and I can meet the dealers on their own ground, and if necessary advertise as impudently as any of the music-hall artists."

Oliver began to hammer on the door. He went and unlocked it and let her in.

"You can talk as much as you like now," he said. "I've said my say."

"I heard you," she replied, "talking to Kühler as if he was a crowd in Hyde Park."

Mendel was lost in thought. He was baffled by this association of art with things like politics and music-halls, which he had always accepted as part of the world's constitution but essentially unimportant. He had no organised mental life. His ideas came direct from his instincts to his mind, and were either used for immediate purposes or dropped back again to return when wanted. However, he recognised the passionate nervous energy that made Logan's words full and round, and he was glad to have him so accessible and so eager and purposeful. On the whole, it did not matter to him why Logan thought his work so important. No one else thought it so, and certainly no one else had taken so much trouble to help it to find recognition. Logan seemed to promise him public fame, and that would delight and reassure his father and mother more than anything else. They treasured every mention of his name in the newspapers, pasted the cuttings in a book, and produced it for every visitor to the house.

Struggling for ideas with which to match Logan's, he became instinctively aware that his friend's enthusiasm was deliberate, not in itself faked, but artificially heated. Behind it lay a deeper passion, from which he was endeavouring to divert the energy it claimed.

Sitting between Logan and Oliver, Mendel could almost intercept the current of feeling that ran between them. It offended him as an indecency that they should have so little control over themselves as to reveal their condition of mutual obsession. . . . It reminded him of his impression of the police-court, where the secret sores of society were exposed nakedly, and queer, helpless, shameless, unrestrained creatures were dealt with almost like parcels in a shop. And again he had the sensation of being bound to them, of being confined with them in that little room, of a dead pressure being upon him, until he must scream or go mad.

He looked at them. Did they not feel it too? Logan was lying back with his hands beneath his head and his lips pressed together and a scowl on his face, looking as though his thoughts and his destiny were almost, but, of course, not quite too much for him. Oliver was looking out of the window with her hands on her hips, humming. She laughed and said:—

"I'd sooner live with an undertaker than an artist. He would be up to a bit of fun sometimes, and he'd do his work without making such a fuss about it."

"There's an undertaker at the corner of the next street. You'd better ask him to take you on."

"As a corpse?" asked Mendel, exploding and spluttering at what seemed to him a very good joke. The others turned and looked at him solemnly, but neither of them laughed, and gradually his amusement subsided and he said lamely:—

"I thought it was very funny."

"Oh! for goodness' sake let's go and have something to eat," said Oliver. "You're turning the place into a tomb with your silence. One'd think you were going to be crowned King of England instead of just holding a potty little exhibition."

"He is going to be crowned King of Artists," said Mendel, making another attempt at a joke.

"By God!" said Logan, "they'd kill me if they knew what I was like inside. Do you ever feel like that, Kühler, that all the birds in the cage would peck you to death for having got outside it? I do. I never see a policeman without feeling he is going to arrest me."

"I used to feel like that sometimes," replied Mendel, "until I was arrested and realised that policemen are just people like anybody else. The man who arrested me was a very nice man."

"Oh! I'm sick of your feelings," cried Oliver, "and I want my dinner."

"All right," said Logan, reaching for his hat; "we'll go to the Pot-au-Feu and afterwards to the Paris Café and fish for critics. I shall nobble one or two swells through Tysoe. We'll pick up the more crapulous and lecherous at the café, and Oliver shall be the bait. So look your prettiest, my dear. . . . Let's have a look at you."

He lit the gas and made her stand beneath it.

"You'll do," he said, patting her cheek. "Come along."

He put his arm through hers. She gave a wriggle of pleasure and pressed close to him.

Mendel followed them downstairs with an omen at his heart. He felt sure that something violent would happen.

But nothing violent did happen. The evening was extraordinarily light-hearted and pleasant. Logan was his old self again, cracking jokes, mimicking people almost to their faces, giving absurd descriptions of his interviews with dealers and buyers, and concocting a burlesque history of his life. Mendel had never laughed so much since he was at the Detmold. His sides ached, and he was hard put to it to keep his countenance when at the café Logan caught two critics and told them that they must make no mistake this time: their reputations were at stake, nay, the reputation of art criticism was at the cross-roads, and art was on the threshold of its greatest period, and criticism should be its herald, not its camp-follower.

"You fellows," said Logan, "use your brains, you are articulate. We are apt to get lost in paint, in coloured dreams of to-morrow and the spaces of the night. We lose touch with the world, with life. We are dependent on you—even the greatest genius is dependent on you. You are the real patrons of art. The herd follows you. Criticism must not shirk its duty. The kind of thing that happened with Manet, with Whistler, ought not to happen again."

The two critics were unused to such treatment from painters. Oliver used her eyes upon them, detached one of them into a flirtation and left the other to Logan's mercies. Logan's blood was up. Here was a game he dearly loved, talking, bullying, hypnotizing another man out of his individuality. He invented monstrously, outrageously—concocted a whole new technique of painting, the discovery of which he ascribed to Mendel's genius, and ended up by saying that painting should be to England what music had been to Germany, a national and at the same time a universal art.

The critic had drunk enough to take it all seriously, and he promised to call and see the work of both painters. His colleague, on the other hand, made arrangements to take Oliver out to tea and won her promise to come and see him at his flat.

"That's all right," said Logan, as they left the café at closing time. "They will remember our names. They will forget how they came to know them and they will write about us."

CHAPTER III

SUCCESS

IT was all very well for Logan to talk about modern England being a music-hall, but his methods were almost identical with those of the publicists whom he decried. The greater part of his energy went to find a market for his wares, leaving very little for the production of the wares themselves. Because he was excited and busy and full of enthusiasm, he took it for granted that he was in a vigorous condition and that his vision of the future of art would be expressed in art. He talked volubly of what he was doing and what he intended to do, even while he worked, and his nerves were so overwrought that he contracted a horror of being alone. Though Oliver jeered at him as he worked he would not let her go out, and when once or twice she insisted, he could not work, and went round to see Mendel and prevented his working either.

Mendel knew nothing of markets and dealers and the relation of art to the world and its habits and institutions. He was carried off his feet by his friend's torrential energy, believed what he said, wore his thoughts as he would have worn his hat, and lived entirely for the exhibition which was to do such wonders for him. Twelve exhibits were required of him. He would have had forty-eight ready if he had been asked for them.

When he missed the delight and the pure joy he had had in working, he told himself that these emotions were childish and unworthy of a man, and a nuisance, because they would have prevented him from knowing clearly what he wanted to do. He dashed at his canvas with a fair imitation of Logan's manner, slung the paint on to it with bold strokes, saying to himself: "There! That will astonish them! That will make them see what painting is!"

And every now and then he would remember that he was in love. He must paint love as it had never been painted before.

For his subject he chose Ruth in the cornfield, but very soon tired of painting ears of corn, so he left it looking like a square yellow block, and painted it up until it resembled a slice of Dutch cheese. Only when he came to Ruth's face and tried to make it express all the love with which his heart was overflowing did he paint with the old fastidious care, but even that could not keep him for long, and he returned to his corn, the shape of which had begun to fascinate him, and he wanted somehow to get it into relation with the hill on which it was set. But he could do nothing with it, and had to go back to Ruth and love.

The effect was certainly startling and novel, and Logan was enthusiastic.

"That's it," he said. "The nearest approach to modern art is the poster, which is not art, of course, because it is not designed by artists. But it does convey something to the modern mind, it does jog it out of its routine and habitual rut. Now, your picture wouldn't do for a poster. It is too good, but it has the same kind of effect. Stop! Look! Listen! Wake up, and see that there are beautiful women in the world and blue skies, and love radiant over all! This woman has nothing to do with what you felt for your wife when you proposed to her, or with what the parson said when the baby died: she is the woman the dream of whom lives always in your heart, although you have long forgotten it. She is the beauty you have passed by for the sake of peace and quiet and a balance at your bank."

"Do you think it is a good picture?" asked Mendel.

"I think it is a good beginning. Two or three more like that and there will be a sensation. There will have to be policemen to regulate the crowd."

Mendel caught his mood of driving excitement and really was convinced that he had broken through to a style of his own, and to the beginning of something that might be called modern art.

He was a little dashed when, after Logan had gone, he fetched his mother over to see it, and all she could find to say was:—

"You used not to paint like that."

"No, of course not," he said impatiently. "The old way was limited, too limited. It was all very well for painting the life down here, just what I saw in front of me. This picture is for an exhibition, all by myself with one other man."

"Logan?" asked Golda dubiously.

"Yes. It is a great honour to give a private exhibition like that at my age. It is most unusual. This is the beginning of a new style. I'm beginning a new life."

"You are not going away?" said Golda in a sudden panic that he was to be snatched away from her.

"I should never go away until you gave your permission," he said. "I am not so very different from Harry that I want to go away and leave my people."

"I never know what will come of that painting of yours."

"Success!" he said jestingly. "And fame and money, and beautiful ladies in furs and diamonds, and carriages and motor-cars, and fine clothes and rings on everybody's fingers."

"I would rather have you seated quietly in my kitchen than all the gold of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba," said Golda.

"Then please like my picture."

"I don't like it."

"Then *say* you like it."

"I don't like it."

"I shall wipe it out then."

"Your new friends will like it."

"*I* like it," he said. "I don't think it is a very good picture, but it means something to me."

And he longed for Morrison to come and see it, for it was the first picture that had directly to do with her. The portrait of her was hardly more than a drawing. What he called an "art student" might have done it, but this Ruth, he felt, was the beginning of his work as an artist, and he thought fantastically that when Morrison saw it she would see that he was to be treated with respect and would fall in by his side, and they would live happily, or at least solidly, ever after.

"Solid" was his great word, and he used it in many senses. It conveyed to his mind the quality of which he could most thoroughly approve. If a thing, or a person, or an action, or an emotion were what he called "solid," then it was a matter of indifference to him whether it was in the ordinary sense good or bad. He was perfectly convinced that if Morrison could only be brought to reason, then his life would solidify and he would be able to go on working in peace.

Meanwhile he was anything but solid. His work, his life, his ideas, his ambition had all melted under Logan's warm touch and were pouring towards the crucial exhibition. Mendel looked forward to it feverishly, because it was to put an end to his present condition, in which he was like a wax candle, luminous, but fast sinking into nothingness. If only he could reach the exhibition in time, the wind of fame would blow out the flame that was reducing him and he would be able to start afresh . . . But all the time as he worked words of Logan's rolled in his mind, and had no meaning whatever, except that they made him think of music-halls and motor-buses and women's legs in tights and newspapers and electric sky-signs spelling out words letter by letter. Out of this hotch-potch pictures, works of art, were to emerge. They were to take their place in it and, according to Logan, reduce it to order. But how was it possible? . . . In the quiet, ordered, patriarchal world of the Jews a rare nature might arise, but in that extraordinary confusion nothing rare could survive. Beauty could never compete on equal terms with women's legs in tights and electric sky-signs; it could never produce an impression on minds obsessed and crammed to overflowing with the multitudinous excitements of the metropolis.

Mendel was convinced that Logan was right, that beauty must emerge to establish authority, and he thought of himself as engaged in a combat with a huge, terrible monster. Every stroke of his brush was a wound upon its flanks and an abomination the less. Yet he loved all the things against which he was fighting, because they made the world gay and stimulating and wonderful. He could see no reason why he should change the world.

It was full enough of change already. Why, in his own time, the electric railways and the motor-buses had brought an amazing transformation in the life of the East End. No one now worked for such little wages as his father had done at the stick-making, and the life of the streets had lost its terrors and dangers. The young men had better things to do than to fight each other or to pelt old Jews with mud, and there was no reason to suppose that such changes would stop where they were.

However, he had Logan's word for it, and Logan had given art a new importance in his eyes. He could not think it out himself without getting hopelessly confused, and there was nothing for it but to go on with his work.

Other relief he had none. He had written three ardent letters to Morrison, telling her, absolutely without restraint, of his love and his need for her, and she had not replied. He was too much hurt to write again, and as he worked he began to hate love, being in love, and the idea of it. He persuaded himself that it was a weakness, and he had ample reason for thinking so, when he compared his loose condition with his old clear singleness of purpose. What chiefly exasperated him in this indefinite unsuccessful love of his was that it exposed him to the passion, every day growing more furious, between Logan and Oliver. It made his own emotions seem fantastic, with the most vital current of his being pouring out in a direction far removed from the rest of his life, apparently ignoring the solid virtues of his Jewish surroundings and the elated vigour of his career among the artists.

"It will not do!" he told himself. "I will not have it! What is this love? Just nonsense invented by people who are afraid of their passions. A lady indeed? *Is* she? A lady is only a woman dressed up. She must learn that she is a woman, or I will have nothing to do with her."

And sometimes he could persuade himself that he had driven Morrison from his thoughts. He finished the portrait of her from memory and was convinced that it was the end of her. It was a good picture and pretty enough to find a buyer, and there it ended. He had got what he wanted of her and could pluck her out of his thoughts.

Logan said it was a very fine picture, a real piece of creation.

"And if that doesn't make them see how damned awful their Public School system is in its effect on women, I'll eat my hat. You've had your revenge, my boy. You have shown her up. Why don't you call it *The Foolish Virgin*? Of all the mischievous twaddle that is talked in this mischievous twaddling country the notion of love is the worst. You can't love a woman unless you live with her, and a woman is incapable of loving a man unless he lives with her. By Jove! We'll hang it and my portrait of Oliver side by side in the exhibition, and I'll call mine *The Woman who Did.*"

"I won't have them side by side," said Mendel. "I want our pictures kept separate. I don't want it said that we are working together."

"But we *are* working together."

"Yes. But along our own lines. We're only together really in our independence. You said yourself that we didn't want to found a school."

"That's true," replied Logan, "but I don't see why we shouldn't have our little joke."

"I don't joke with art," said Mendel grimly, and that settled the matter.

It was the first time he had set his will against his friend's, and he was surprised to find how soft Logan was. Surely, then, it was he who was the leader, he who was blazing the new trail for art. . . . He had to bow to the fact that Logan had a programme while he had none. However, having once asserted his will, he became critical, and was not again the docile little disciple he had been.

Logan wanted to draw up a manifesto for the catalogue, to enunciate the first principles of modern art, namely, that a picture must have (*a*) not merely a subject, but a conception based on but not bounded by its subject; (*b*) form, meaning the form dictated by the logic of the conception, which must of necessity be different from the logic dictated by the subject, which would lead either to the preconceptions and prejudices of the schools or to irrelevant and non-pictorial considerations. All this was set out at some length, and appended were a number of maxims, such as:—

"In art the important thing is art.

"Abstraction precedes selection.

"Art exists to keep in circulation those spiritual forces, such as æsthetic emotion, which are denied in ordinary human communications.

"Photography has released art from its ancient burden of representation," etc., etc.

With the spirit of this manifesto Mendel was in agreement, though he could make but little of its letter. He refused to agree to it because so much talk seemed to him unnecessary.

"If we can say what we mean to say in paint, then we need not talk. If we cannot say it in paint, then we have no right to talk."

"You'd soon bring the world to a standstill," said Logan, "if you limited talk to the people who have a right to it. It is just those people who never open their mouths. I think it is criminal of them, just out of shyness and disgust, to give the buffoons and knaves an open field."

"All the same," grunted Mendel, "I am not going to agree to the manifesto. People will read it and laugh at it, and never look at the pictures. You seem to think of everything but them. I wonder you don't set up as a dealer."

"You're overworking," said Logan, "that's what you are doing. And directly the exhibition is open I shall pack you off to Brighton."

Already a week before the opening they began to feel that the eyes of London were upon them. They crept about the streets half-shamefacedly, like conspirators, relaxed and wary, waiting for the moment when their triumph should send their shoulders back and their heads up, and they would march together through a London which owed its salvation to them. Not since his portrait had appeared in the Yiddish paper had Mendel been so defiant and so morosely arrogant.

He was ill with excitement and could not do a stroke of work. Every minute of the day he spent with Logan and Oliver, to whom Tysoe was often added. He dined with them at the Pot-au-Feu, took them all out to lunch and tea at places like Richmond and Kew, had them to his house, and was squeezed by the approaching success to buy Logan's two largest pictures before the public could have access to them.

"They are masterpieces!" he cried, swinging his long hands, "absolute masterpieces! You don't know how much good it does me to be with you two. Absolutely sincere, you are! That's what I like about you. Sincere! One looks for sincerity in vain everywhere else.

Sincerity has vanished from the theatre, the novel, music, poetry. I suppose it is democracy—letting the public in behind the scenes, so that they see through all the tricks."

"An artist isn't a conjurer!" said Mendel.

"That is just what artists have been," cried Logan, "and they can't bluff it out any more."

"Exactly!" gurgled Tysoe, who when he was roused from his habitual weak lethargy lost control of his voice, so that it wobbled between a shrill treble and a husky bass. "Exactly! That's what I like about you two. No bluff, no tricks. You do what you want to do and damn the consequences. Ha! ha!"

So ill was Mendel just before the exhibition that Logan refused to allow him anywhere near it, and insisted that they should both go to Brighton, leaving Oliver to go to the private view and spy out the land.

Oliver protested. She wanted to go to Brighton.

"You shall have a new dress and a new hat," said Logan. "You must go to the private view like a real lady. Cluny doesn't know you, and you must go up to him every now and then and ask him in a loud voice what the prices are. You might even pretend to be a little deaf and make him speak clearly and distinctly."

The idea tickled Mendel so that he began to laugh, could not stop himself, and was soon almost hysterical.

"What's the matter with you?" asked Oliver, shaking him.

He gasped:—

"I—I was laughing at the idea of your being a real lady. Ha! ha! ha!"

She gave him a clout over the head that sobered him. Logan pounced on her like a tiger.

"You devil!" he said. "You she-devil! Don't you see the poor boy's ill?"

"What's that to me?" she screamed, with her head wobbling backwards and forwards horribly as he shook her. "It's n-nothing t-to m-me!"

She caught Logan by the wrist and sent him spinning, for she was nearly as strong as he.

"Go to Brighton!" she shouted. "I don't care. I'll be glad to be rid of you both. You won't find me here when you come back, that's all, you and your little hurdy-gurdy boy! You only need a monkey and an organ to make you complete. Why don't you try it? You'd do better at that than out of pictures."

Logan could not contain himself. His rage burst out of him in a howl like that of a wind in a chimney, a dismal, empty moan. He stood up, and the veins on his neck swelled and his mouth opened and shut foolishly, for he could find nothing to say.

"You slut, you squeezed-out dishclout, you sponge!" he roared at last. "Clear out, you drab! Clear out into the streets, you trull! Draggle your skirts in the mud, you filth, you octopus! Sell the carcase that you don't know how to give, you marble!"

She flung up her hands and sank on to her knees, and let down her hair, and moaned:—

"O God! O God! O God!"

Logan's fury snapped.

"For God's sake! For God's sake!" he said. "What has come over us? Oh, God help us! What are we doing? What are we coming to? Nell! Nell! I didn't know what I was saying!"

He went down on his knees beside her, and Mendel, who had been numbed but inwardly elated by the storm, could not endure the craven surrender, the cowardly reconciliation, and he left them.

Out in the street he stood tottering on the curb, and spat into the gutter, with extreme precision, between the bars of a grating.

At Brighton, whither they went next day, Logan explained himself.

"It is extraordinary how near love is to hate, and how rotten love becomes if hate is suppressed—stale and tasteless and vapid."

"Are you talking about yourself and Oliver?" asked Mendel.

"Yes."

"Then please don't. I don't mind what happens between you and her so long as it doesn't happen in front of me."

"I'm sorry," said Logan; "but it can't always be prevented. I don't see the use of pretence."

"Neither do I. But some things are your own affair, and it is indecent to let other people see them."

"Oh, a row's a row!" said Logan cheerfully. "And one is all the better for it."

"But if a woman treated me like that I should never speak to her again."

"Love's too deep for that. You can't stand on your dignity in love."

"I should make her understand once and for all that I would not have it."

"Then she would deceive you. If you played the tyrant over a girl like Oliver she would deceive you."

Mendel stared and his jaw dropped. Had Logan forgotten the night in Paris? Was he such a fool as to pretend he did not know, could not see that the whole liberation of frenzy in Oliver dated from that night? . . . Oh, well! It was no affair of his.

To change the subject he said:—

"We ought to get the press-cuttings to-morrow. I wonder if we shall sell the lot? It's a good beginning, having tickets on your two."

"I bet we sell the lot in a week. Oliver has two of the critics in her pocket. What do you say to giving a party in honour of the event? We can afford to forgive our enemies now, and there's a social side to the movement which we ought not to neglect."

Mendel made no reply. They were sitting on the front. The smooth, glassy sea, reflecting the stars and the lights of the pier, soothed and comforted him. Brighton was to him like a part of London, and he sank drowsily into the happy fantasy that he was being thrust out of the streets towards the stars and the vast power that lay beyond them. He was weary of the streets and the clamour, and he wanted peace and serenity, rest from his own turbulence, the peace which has no dwelling upon earth and lives only in eternity.

"How good it would be," he said suddenly, "if one could just paint without a thought of what became of one's pictures."

"That's no good," replied Logan. "One must live."

The first batch of cuttings arrived in the morning. They were brief, for the most part, quite respectful and appreciative. Mendel learned, to his astonishment, that he was influenced by Logan, and one critic lamented that a promising young painter, who could so simply render the life of his race, should have been infected with modern heresies. There was no uproar, neither of them was hailed as a master, and Logan in more than one instance was dismissed as an imitator of Calthrop.

"Calthrop!" said Logan, gulping down his disappointment and disgust. "Calthrop! Oh well, it is good enough for a beginning. It would have been very different if you had let me print the manifesto. The swine need to be told, you know. They want a lead. . . . We'll wait for the Sunday papers."

London was curiously unchanged when they returned. Mendel was half afraid he would be recognised as they came out of Charing Cross Station, but no one looked at him. The convulsion through which he had lived had left people going about their business, and he supposed that if an earthquake happened in Trafalgar Square people would still be going about their business in the Strand.

They were eager for Oliver's account of the private view, and took a taxi-cab to Camden Town. She was wearing her new dress and was quite the lady: shook hands with Mendel and asked him haughtily in a mincing tone how he was. From all these signs he judged that the exhibition had been a success.

"Quite a lot of people came," she said. "Real swells. There were two motor-cars outside."

"Yes," said Logan. "Tysoe agreed to leave his car outside for a couple of hours to encourage people to go in."

"Kühler's picture of the girl with short hair sold at once," she said.

His pleasure in this news was swallowed up in his dislike of hearing Morrison spoken of by her.

"All your drawings but one are gone, Logan. I listened to what people said. They wanted to know who you were, and Cluny said you had a great reputation in the North. People laughed out loud at Kühler's *Ruth*, and I heard one man say it was only to be expected. He said the Jews can never produce art. They can only produce infant prodigies."

CHAPTER IV

REACTION

LOGAN made nearly two hundred pounds out of the exhibition and Mendel over a hundred. His family rejoiced in his triumph. A hundred pounds was a good year's income to them. They rejoiced, but it was an oppression to him to go back to them and to talk in Yiddish, in which there were no words for all that he cared for most. Impossible to explain to them about art, for they had neither words nor mental conceptions. Art was to them only a wonderful way of making money, a kind of magic that went on in the West End, where, once a man was established, he had only to open his pockets for money to fall into them.

Up to a point he could share their elation, for in his bitter moments he too was predatory. If the Christian world would not admit him on equal terms he had no compunction about despoiling it.

The words "infant prodigy" stuck in his throat, and with his family it seemed indeed impossible that the Jews could produce art. How could they, when they had no care for it? And how had he managed to find his way to it? . . . Going back over his career step by step it seemed miraculous, and as though there were a special providence governing his life—Mr. Kuit, the Scotch traveller, Mitchell, Logan, all were as though they had been pushed forward at the critical moment. And for what? Merely to exploit an infant prodigy with a skilful trick? . . . He could not, he would not believe it. The pressure that had driven him along, the pressure within himself, had been too great for that, just to squeeze him out into the open and to fill his pockets with money. There was more meaning in it all than that, more shape, more design.

Yet when he considered his work he was lacerated with doubt. It ended so palpably in the portrait of his father and mother, and he knew that he could never go back to that again. An art that was limited to Jewry was no art. Among the Jews no light could live. They would not have it. They would snuff it out, for it was their will to dwell in dark places and to wait upon the illumination that never came, as of course it never would until they looked within themselves.

Within himself he knew there was a most vivid light glowing, a spark which only needed a breath of air upon it to burst into flame. He was increasingly conscious of it, and it made him feel transparent, as though nothing could be hidden from those who looked his way. What was there to hide? If there was evil, it lived but a little while and was soon spent, while that which was of worth endured and grew under recognition.

Thence came his devotion to Logan, who simply ignored everything that apparently gave offence to others and saluted the rare, rich activity. It was nothing to Logan that he was a Jew and poor and uneducated: he was educated in art, and what more did he want? Logan was a friend indeed, and had proved it over and over again. He would take his doubts to Logan and they would be healed, but first he must go to the exhibition, the thought of which made him unhappy and uneasy.

Cluny received him with open arms:—

"A most successful exhibition. A great success. I hope you will let me have some of your work by me. A most charming exhibition. There was only one mistake, if I may say so: the *Ruth*."

Mendel walked miserably through the rooms. All Logan's pictures were in the best light: his own were half in shadow.

"Mr. Logan has the making of a great reputation," said Cluny, "a very great reputation."

"Oh, very clever!" said Mendel, suddenly exasperated more by Logan's pictures than by the dealer.

Indeed, "very clever" was the right description for Logan's work. It attracted and charmed and tickled, but it did not satisfy. The pictures gave Mendel the same odd sense of familiarity as the picture in Camden Town had done, and turning suddenly, his eye fell on his own unhappy *Ruth*. The figure was shockingly bad. He acknowledged the simpering sentimentality of the face. And he had been trying to paint love! But in spite of the figure, the picture held him. It was to him the matrix of the whole exhibition. Wiping out of consideration his own early drawings, it explained and accounted for every other piece of work. The least dexterous of them all, it had freshness and vitality and a certain thrust of simplification which everything else lacked. It was "solid," and worth all Logan's pictures put together.

"Very good prices," said the dealer. "Very good indeed."

Mendel paid no attention to him. He wanted to study his *Ruth,* to find out its precise meaning for him, and, if possible, in what mysterious part of his talent it had originated.

It had made him feel happy again and had restored his confidence. He was serenely sure of himself, without arrogance. He was almost humble, yet tantalised because he could not think of a whole picture in the terms of that one piece of paint. He remembered the strange excitement in which he had conceived it, the almost nonchalance with which he had executed it. And to think that not a soul had seen it! The fools! The fools!

He was ashamed to be seen looking so intently at his own work. The next day he was back again and told Cluny that it was not for sale.

"I don't think it's a seller, Mr. Kühler," said Cluny.

"It's not for sale," repeated Mendel.

He went every day and had no other thought. He wandered about in a dream, not seeing people in the streets, not hearing when he was spoken to.

On the fifth day as he entered Cluny's he began to tremble, and he fell against a man who was coming out. The blood rushed to his heart and beat at his temples. He knew why it was. The air seemed full of an enchantment that settled upon him and drew him towards the gallery. He knew he was going to see her, and she was there with Clowes, standing in front of his *Ruth.* Clowes was laughing at it, but Morrison, with brows knit, obviously angry, was trying to explain it.

"I'm trying to explain the cornfield to Clowes," she said. "Do come and help me."

"I can't explain it myself," he said, marvelling at the ease of the meeting. At once he and she were together and Clowes was out of it, like a dweller in another world.

"I don't think you ought to do things you can't explain," said Clowes.

"Then you are wiping out Michael Angelo, and El Greco, and Blake, and Piero."

"Yes," said Mendel. "You are wiping out inspiration altogether."

"Oh! if you think you are inspired I have nothing more to say," replied Clowes rather tartly. She had felt instinctively that Mendel and Morrison would meet at the gallery, and was annoyed all the same that it had happened. She knew how they were regarded, and she herself did not approve. Morrison knew how impossible it was, and Clowes thought she ought not to allow it to go on.

Clowes also recognised how completely she was out of it, and she made excuses and left them.

"You are the only one who likes it," he said.

"I don't like it, but I know that it isn't bad. It isn't good either, but it is real and it is you."

"I want no more than that," he said, "from you."

In his mind he had prepared all sorts of reproaches for his meeting with her, but they fell away from his lips. He could only accept that it was good and sweet and natural to be with her.

He told her quite simply how he had come to paint the picture, and how he had tried to paint his love for her. She smiled and shook away her smile.

"I'm glad it isn't anything like that really," she said.

"I tried to tell you what it was like when I wrote to you."

"Yes."

That was all she could say. She had been very unhappy, often desperately wretched, because her instinct fought so furiously against the idea of love with him whom she loved.

"The picture has made me very happy," she added.

"It means that what I have been wanting to happen to you has happened. You *are* different, you know. I can talk to you so much more easily."

He suggested that they should walk in the Park and spend the day together, and she consented, glad that all the reproaches and storms she had dreaded should be so lightly brushed away.

Happy, happy lovers, for whom nothing can defile the heavenly beauty of this earth; happy, from whom Time streams away, bearing with it all the foolish, restless activity of men; happy, for whom the pomps and vanities of the world are as though they had never been! Thrice happy two, who in your united spirit bear so easily all the beauty, all the suffering, all the sorrow in the world, and bring it forth in joy, the flower of life that cometh up as a vision, fades, and sheds its seed upon the rich, warm soil of humanity. Emblem of immortality for ever shining in the union of spirits, in the enchantment of two who are together and in love.

So happy were they that they wandered for the most part in silence through the avenues and over the grassy spaces of the Park.

Of the two, she had the better brain, and, indeed, the stronger character. She had been toughened in the struggle to break out of the web of hypocrisy and meaningless tradition of gentility in which her family was enmeshed, and the freedom she had won was very precious to her. She kept it as a touchstone by which to measure her acquaintance and her experience, and, using it now, she realised that there were two distinct delights in being with Mendel on this tender autumn day; one tempted her with its promise of furious joys and wild, baffling emotions. It seduced her with its suggestion that this way lay kindness, the gift to him of his desire, peace, and satisfaction. But behind the suggestion of kindness lay a menace to her freedom, which, being so much more precious than herself, she longed for him to share, as in the keen happiness of that day he had done. That was the other delight, more serene and more rare, infinitely more powerful, and she would not have it sacrificed to the less. The gift of herself to which she was tempted must mean the blending of her freedom with his, for without that there would be no true gift, only a surrender.

She could not think it out or make it clear to herself, but she knew that it was surrender he was asking, and she knew that if she surrendered she would be no more to him in a little while than the other women of passage with whom his life was darkened.

Ought she not then to tell him, to keep him from living in false hopes? She persuaded herself that she ought, but she did not wish to spoil this delicious day. It was such torture to her when he blazed out at her and he became ugly with egoism.

"Of course," he said, "the *Ruth* makes all the difference. I can't let you go now, because you are the only one who has really understood my work. I am almost frightened of it myself, and it makes me feel desperately lonely when I think of all I shall have to go through to get at what it really means."

"No. If you want me like that I don't want you to let me go," she said, "for it is so important."

"Yes," he said. "It may mean an entirely new kind of picture, for I don't know anybody's work that has quite what is hammering away in my head to get out. It must be because you love me that you can feel it when no one else can. Even to Logan it is only like a superior poster."

How adorable he was in this mood of simplicity and humility! She could relax her vigilance, and sway unreservedly to his mood and give him all that he required of her, her clearness, her sensitive purity.

"You are like no other woman in the world to me," he went on. "You fill me with the most wonderful joy, like a Cranach or a Dürer drawing. I can forget almost that you are a woman, so that it is a most wonderful surprise that you are one after all. You are the only person in the world whom I can place side by side with my mother."

"You don't know what it is to me," she said, "to have a friend so strong and frank as you are."

He put out his hand and laid it on her arm wonderingly, as if to satisfy himself that she was really there, much as on his first visit to Hampstead he had touched the grass.

"I think I shall live to be very old," he said, "and you will be just the same to me then as you are now."

"Oh, Mendel!"

"Say that again!" he said, but she could not speak. Her eyes were brimming with tears and she hung her head. She longed to take him to her arms and to fondle him, to make him young, to charm away the pitiful old weary helplessness that he had. Reacting from this mood in her, which he did not understand and took for the first symptoms of surrender, he became wild and boastful, and clowned like a silly boy to attract her attention.

Her will set against him. She could not endure the sudden swoop from the highest sympathy to the gallantry of the streets, and when he was weary of his tricks she tried to bring him to his senses by asking him suddenly:—

"Is Logan a nice man?"

"He is my best friend. He has wonderful ideas and energy like a steam-engine, and he has suffered too. He is not like the art students who expect painting pictures to be as easy as knitting. He could have been almost anything, but he believes that art is the most important thing of all. He has made a great difference to me, by teaching me to be independent. . . . I will take you to see him one day."

"I should like to meet him, because he has made a great difference in you."

"He steals."

That gave Morrison a shock, for Mendel seemed to be stating the fact as a recommendation.

"Yes. When he has no money he steals. I went with him once and we stole some reproductions."

She was sorry she had mentioned Logan. Mendel was a different creature at once. Their glamourous happiness was gone. Logan seemed to have stalked in between them and the purity of their delight withered away.

He felt it as strongly as she, but thought she was deliberately escaping from him, that she was fickle and could not stay out the day's happiness. Women, he knew, were like that. They gave out just as the best was still to come.

It was dusk and they were in a lonely glade. He pounced on her and drew her to him:—

"I want you to kiss me."

"No—no!"

"Yes—yes—yes! I say you shall. I will not have you let it all slip away."

"Don't! Don't!" she said, in a passion of resentment. He was spoiling it all. How could he be so crude and insensible after this matchless day?

At last he was convinced of her anger.

"I don't understand you," he said. "Don't you want anything like that?"

"It has spoiled the day for me," she answered, "or almost, for nothing could really spoil it."

She walked on and he stood still for a moment. Then he ran after her.

"Did you . . . did you hate me then?"

"No, I didn't hate you. I hated myself more because I can't say what I feel."

"If you don't love me like that," he said, "I love you all the same. I must see you often—always. I can't live, I can't work, if you don't let me see you. . . . No. That isn't true. I shall work whatever happens."

How she loved his honesty! He was making no attempt to creep behind her defences. They had baffled him, and he counted his wounds cheerfully.

"If you don't love me like that," he went on excitedly, "it doesn't make any difference. You are my love all the same. You are in all my thoughts, in every drop of my blood, and you can do with me as you will. If you don't love me like that I will never touch you. I can understand your not wanting to touch me, because I am dirty. I am dirty in my soul. I will never touch you. I promise that I will never touch you, and what you do not like in me you shall never see. . . ."

She broke down, and burst into an unrestrained fit of weeping. Why could she not make clear to him, to herself, what she felt so clearly? . . . Oh! She knew she ought to tell him to go, to spare him all the suffering that he must endure, but also she knew by the measure of her need for him how sorely he must need her. Their need of each other was too profound, too strong, too passionate, easily to find its way to surface life, nor could it be satisfied with sweets too easily attained. . . . She must wait. To leave him or to surrender to him would be a betrayal of that high mystery wherein they had their spiritual meeting.

"I shall win," she said to herself, "I shall win. I know I shall win."

And she amazed him with her sudden lightness of heart. She laughed and told him how solemnly Clowes was taking it all, and how the loose-tongued busybodies were talking. . . . As if it mattered what they said! He mattered more than all of them, because they took easily what was next to hand and grew fat on it, while he fought his way upward step by step and was never satisfied, and would fight his way always step by step with bloody pains and suffering.

"Oh, Mendel!" she cried; "I'm so proud—so proud of you."

She was too swift for him. He came lumbering after her, puzzled, amazed, confounded at finding in this girl something that was so much more than woman, something that could actually live on the high level of his creative thought, something as necessary to his thought as dew to the grass and the ripening corn.

CHAPTER V

LOGAN GIVES A PARTY

THE impulse to take his doubts to Logan endured, and was aggravated by the wretchedness into which Mendel was plunged by Morrison's return and her powerful effect upon his life. He raged against himself as an idiot and a fool for taking her seriously and for believing that she could realise his work when as yet he understood it so little himself. If it was love, then have the love-making and get it over. If she refused, then let her go! What did she mean by slipping away just when the day's happiness began to demand utterance, closeness, intimacy, the promise of the dearest and most comfortable joys?

He knew that he was deceiving himself, that she could do just as she liked and it would make no difference, but he also knew that he mistrusted her. In his heart he suspected her of being one of those who like to pretend that life can be all roses and honey, that there can be summer without winter, day without night. . . . Just a pretty English girl, he called her, and, in his most bitter moods, he regarded himself as caught; and in that there was a certain sardonic satisfaction. It seemed appropriate that, having known many women without a particle of love for them, he should be in love with a woman who did not wish to have anything to do with him.

When he told Logan about it, that experienced individual smoked three cigarettes and was silent for ten minutes by the clock.

"It won't do," he said; "give it up. You're in love with her. Oh yes! You were bound to have your taste of it, being so young. But, for God's sake, keep it clear of your work. I know it is very delightful and all that, and like the first blush of spring, and that she seems to understand everything. First love is always the same. She seems to understand, but so do the violets in the woods, and the apple-blossom in an orchard, and the singing birds on a spring morning. They all seem to understand everything. Life is solved: there are no more problems, and the rarest flower of all is the human heart. Yet the violets and the apple-blossoms fade and the birds sing no more: the spring passes and the summer is infernally hot and stale, and winter comes at last. So it is with love and women. Nothing endures but art, and that they are physically incapable of understanding. My God! Don't I know it? A picture of mine means no more to Oliver than my boot does—rather less, because my boot is warmed with the warmth of my body. That's all *she* understands."

He looked down at the boots and fidgeted with his hands.

"Yes. That's all *she* understands," he repeated.

He was very haggard, and he looked up at Mendel as though he were trying to say something more than he could get into words; but Mendel was preoccupied with his own perplexities, and Logan's appealing glance was lost upon him.

"I'm older than you," Logan continued, "and of course it is difficult for me to say anything that will be of any use to you, but a man like you ought not to let life get in his way. It isn't worth it. Life is only valuable to you as a condition of working. Nothing in it ought to be valuable for its own sake. Do you hear? You ought never to have anything in your life that you couldn't sacrifice—couldn't do without."

He seemed to be rather thinking aloud than talking, and something indescribably solemn in his voice made Mendel shiver. He had hardly heard what Logan was saying and, thinking he must be in a draught, he looked towards the window.

Logan went on:—

"She'll be back in a moment. We don't often get the opportunity to talk like this. She has begun to read books, and thinks she knows about pictures now. She won't leave us alone. That damned critic has been stuffing her up and she reads all his articles."

He made a grimace of weary disgust.

"I care about you, Kühler, almost more than I do about myself, which is saying a good deal. Don't let this love business get mixed up with your work, especially if, as you say, it is Platonic—that is the worst poison of all—almost, almost. . . . Still, I'd like to see the girl. Bring her to the party. We might join up and make a quartette—if she can stand Oliver. Women can't, as a rule. They don't like full-blooded people of their own sex."

"She wants to know you," replied Mendel half-heartedly. "I'm always talking to her about you."

"All right," said Logan. "Bring her to the party."

Downstairs the front door slammed and Logan gave a nervous start. His whole aspect changed. He lost the drooping solemnity that had come over him and was stiff, quick, and alert, and prepared to be droll, as he was when it was a question of humbugging Tysoe and Cluny.

Oliver came in with a bottle of wine under each arm. She was in very good spirits and looking remarkably handsome.

"Hello, Kühler!" she cried. "How do you like being a success? We're full of beans. We're going to take a house. Did Logan tell you?"

"No," said Mendel. "I hadn't heard of it."

"Well, it's true. We've done with the slums and being poor and all that. We're going to have a house and I'm going to have a servant, and I shall have nothing to do all day but eat chocolates and read novels and have people to tea."

"So you're going to be a real lady."

"Yes. I'm going to wear a wedding-ring, and we're going to give out that we're married, so that Mrs. Tysoe can call on me."

"You're not going to do anything of the kind," snapped Logan.

"I am. I don't see why I should have a beastly time just because you won't marry me, setting yourself up against the world and saying you don't believe in marriage."

"I don't want to be more tied to you than I am," said Logan, endeavouring to adopt a reasonable tone.

He was curiously subdued, and never took his eyes off her. Mendel had the impression that they must recently have had a quarrel. Logan was endeavouring to placate her, but she was constantly aggressive. She seemed to have gained in personality and to be possessed of a definite will. She was no longer shrouded in the mists of sensuality, but stood out clearly, a figure of such vitality that Mendel could no longer keep his lazy contempt for her. Almost admirable she was, yet he found her detestable. He thought she should be thanking her lucky stars for having found such a man as Logan; she should be taking gratefully what he chose to give her, instead of setting herself up and putting forward her own vulgar needs. If a woman threw in her lot with an artist, she ought to revel in her freedom from the petty interests and insignificant courtesies that made the lives of ordinary women so humiliating.

What was she up to? He knew that there was a deeper purpose in her, something very definite, for which she had been able to summon up her raw vitality. He could understand Logan being fascinated. If he had been in love with the woman he would have been the same, and his mind would have been swamped by sensual curiosity.

Before, he had always been rather mystified to know what Logan saw in the woman, but now the infatuation was comprehensible to him. His mind played about it with a strange delight, and he was even envious of Logan to be consumed in the heart of that mystery upon whose fringes he himself was held. And he thought that if he brought Morrison to see them he would be able to understand her better, and might even be able to place his finger on the weak place in her armour.

"You two do give me the pip," said Oliver. "You sit there as glum and silent as though you were in church. Taking yourselves too seriously, I call it."

Still in his forbearing tone Logan said:—

"We talk of things which are very hard to understand."

"Oh, give it up!" she said. "Leave all that to folk with brains and education. Why can't you just paint without talking about it? You'd get twice as much work done."

"Because, don't you see, unless you're a blasted amateur, you can't paint without rousing all sorts of questions in your mind—questions that don't seem to have anything to do with painting; but unless you attempt to answer them there's no satisfaction in working."

"Oh, cheese it!" she said; "I know what the critics look for, and it has nothing to do with brains. It is like being in love."

"Who told you that?" asked Logan with sudden heat; but before she could answer him Mendel had exploded:—

"It is nothing at all like being in love. That is what all the beastly Christians think of—being in love. And they want art always, always to remind them of that—how they have been, are, or will be in love, as they call it. And what they call being in love is nothing but a filthy lecherous longing, which is a thousand miles beneath love, and twenty thousand miles beneath art, which is so rare, so noble, so beautiful a mystery that only those whom God has chosen can understand it at all; for while you are in this state of longing you can understand, you can feel nothing at all except a hungry delight in yourself and your own sticky sensations. What can women know of art? It needs strength and will, and women have neither; they have only obstinate fancies."

When he had done he was so astonished at himself that he gasped for breath. Logan and Oliver, gaping at him, seemed ridiculous and little. Talking to them was a waste of breath, because when she was there Logan was not himself, but only a kind of excrescence upon her monstrous vitality. The room seemed to stink. It was airless and reeking with sex. He must get out and away, under the sky, among the trees, upon his beloved

Hampstead. . . . Without another word he stalked away.

"Well! I never!" exclaimed Oliver. "Is Kühler in love?"

"Oh! shut up!" said Logan wearily.

For the party the room was cleared and a pianola was hired. The guests were invited to bring their own glasses and drink, and also any friends they liked. The result was that half the habitués of the Paris Café turned up, including Jessie Petrie, Mitchell, and Thompson, who was over for a short time from Paris, very important and mysterious because he had something to do with a forthcoming exhibition of Modern French Art which was to knock London silly. And there was a rumour that Calthrop himself was coming.

Oliver wore a new evening dress, which she had insisted on buying because she was very proud of her bust and arms. The dress was of emerald green silk and she looked very lovely in it—"Like a water nymph," said Logan, and he went out and bought her a string of red corals to give the finishing touch.

"You won't have much of this kind of thing when we move," he said. "It is to be farewell to Bohemia. I'm going to settle down to work. I've taught Kühler a thing or two, but he has taught me how to work."

"Damn Kühler! I hate him," said Oliver.

"You can hate him as much as you choose. It won't hurt him or me. I'm not a Hercules, and my work and you are about as much as I can manage."

"You're a nice one to be giving a party. You talk as though you would be in your grave next week."

"It is a farewell party."

"'Farewell to the Piano,'" laughed Oliver. "That was the last piece I learned when I had music lessons."

Mitchell was among the first to arrive. He had been ill, and looked washed-out and unwholesome. There was very little of the Public School boy left in him.

"Is Kühler coming?" he asked nervously.

"I expect so," answered Logan. "Do you know how to manage a pianola?"

"Yes. We've got one at home."

"You might play it then, to keep things going until they liven up."

Mitchell was placed at the pianola, and was still there when Mendel arrived with Morrison.

"I'm very glad to meet you," said Logan. "Kühler has talked about you so often."

"Yes," said Morrison.

"I hope you don't mind a Bohemian party. They are a mixed lot."

"No," said Morrison.

"Good God!" thought Logan. "Not a word to say for herself!"

Mendel introduced her to Oliver, who looked her up and down superciliously—this little schoolgirl in her brown tweed coat and skirt.

"I'm sorry I didn't dress," said Morrison. "I didn't know."

She shrank from the big, fleshy woman, who made her feel very unhappy. Yet she wanted to be fair. She had heard Mendel storm and rage against Oliver and she hated to be prejudiced. It distressed her not to like anybody, for she found most people likeable. She tried to be amiable:—

"I'm so glad the exhibition was such a success. Everybody is talking about it."

"Oh! yes, yes," said Oliver vacantly. Obviously she was not listening. She had eyes only for the men, and she bridled with pleasure when she attracted their attention.

Morrison was glad to escape to a corner, where she could watch the strange people and be amused by them, their attitudes and gestures and queer, conceited efforts deliberately to charm each other.

She blushed when she saw Mitchell at the pianola, and thought she had been rather foolish and weak to allow Mendel to bully her into dismissing him from her acquaintance, and she was relieved when she saw Mendel take in the situation and go up to Mitchell and tap him on the shoulder and enter into eager discussion of the pianola. She was less happy when she saw Mendel take Mitchell's place, and Mitchell make a bee-line for herself.

An astonishing change came over the music, which got into Mendel's blood. It was maddening, it was glorious to feel that he had all that wealth of sound in his hands. He knew nothing of music, and it was almost pure rhythm to him, and he wished to beat it out, to accentuate it as much as possible. The machine confounded him every now and then by running too fast or too slow, but he soon learned to pedal less violently, and then he was gloriously happy and drunk with excitement.

Astonishing, too, was the change in the company. Everybody began to talk and to laugh, and space was cleared in the middle of the room, and Clowes and a young man from the Detmold began to dance. Jessie Petrie and Weldon joined them, and soon the room was full of whirling, gliding couples.

Said Mitchell to Morrison:—

"I didn't expect to find you here. Are you going to dance?"

"No. I like watching."

He sat on the floor by her side, and, hanging his head, he said woefully:—

"So Kühler's won! Gawd! He always gets what he wants. There's no resisting him."

"Don't be absurd," said Morrison. "I hear you've been ill."

"Yes. I've been going to the dogs, absolutely to the dogs. I had to pull up. . . . I didn't know you knew Logan; but, of course, as he's so thick with Kühler——!"

"I met him for the first time to-night. What do you think of his work?"

"Flashy!" said Mitchell. "Very flashy. . . . Will you let me come and see you again?"

"I'd rather not, if you don't mind."

"Why do you dislike me so much?"

"I don't dislike you. I can't trust you not to be silly."

"Gawd! I bet I'm not half so silly as Kühler!"

"He is never silly!"

"Ah! Now you're offended!"

She turned away from him and refused to speak again. His half-flirtatious, half-patronising manner offended her deeply, and was far more of an affront to her than Logan's almost open scorn of her as a little bread-and-butter miss. She wished Mendel would leave the pianola, but he was enthralled and could not tear himself away. He played the same tune over and over again, or went straight from one to another, swaying to and fro, beating time with his hands, swinging his head up and down.

Mitchell went very red in the face and slipped away. Presently she saw him dancing with Oliver.

After a few moments she found Logan by her side, and he said kindly:—

"I'm afraid you are not enjoying yourself much."

"Oh yes!" she gasped, in a frightened voice.

"I was thinking you were not used to this kind of thing."

"Oh yes! I often go to parties in people's studios."

"I remember, I saw you at the Merlin's Cave one night."

"Yes, I remember. I didn't enjoy that a bit. It all seemed such a sham."

"So it was," said Logan. "So is most of this. These people aren't really wicked, though they like to pretend they are. I don't dance myself. I'm too clumsy. Clog-dancing I can do, but not dancing with anybody else. . . . But perhaps I am keeping you——?"

"Oh no! I'm very happy looking on."

"Kühler's worth watching, isn't he?"

This was said with such insolent meaning that Morrison wilted like a sensitive plant. She managed to gasp out "Yes," and went on asking wild, pointless questions, with her thoughts whirling far removed from her words.

Why were all these people so impertinent, with their trick of plunging into intimate life without waiting for intimacy? She felt that in a moment Logan would be telling her all about himself and Oliver by way of luring her on to discuss Mendel. That she had no intention of doing, with him or with any one else.

"She's just a shy little fool," thought Logan, "and hopelessly, hopelessly young."

"I'm unhappy!" thought Morrison, and it seemed to her foolish and mean to be so. Her loyalty resented her weakness. She owed it to Mendel to enjoy herself and to share as far as she could his friends. But there was in the atmosphere of that gathering something that repelled her and roused the fighting quality in her, something indecent, something that hurt her as the picture of the flayed man in the anatomy book hurt her.

Mendel was playing a wild rag-time tune.

"I think I'd like to dance to this tune. You must dance with me. I don't think you ought to be out of your own party," she said to Logan, who caught her up in a great bear's hug, trod on her toes, knocked her knees, pressed his fingers so tight into her back that she could hardly bear it, and at last, as the music ceased, deposited her by Mendel's side.

"It is a marvellous thing, this machine," he said. "I should like to go on at it all night. Have you been dancing? You look hot. You said you weren't going to dance."

"I made Logan dance. He nearly killed me!"

"How did you get on?"

"Not—not very well."

"You don't like him?"

Jessie Petrie came running up: "Kühler, Kühler!" she cried. "Do, do dance with me!"

He was very angry with Morrison for daring not to like Logan, for making up her mind in two minutes that she did not like him. He gave her a furious glance as Weldon took his place and started a waltz, put his arms round Jessie's waist, and swung into the dance.

"Oh, Kühler!" said Jessie in her pretty birdlike voice, "I heard the most awful story about you the other day."

"Do be quiet!" he grunted. "Dance!"

But he was out of temper, out of tune, and the music he had been crashing out on the pianola was thudding in his head, so that he could not respond either to the music of the waltz or to Jessie's eagerness.

"Isn't it funny Thompson being back in London? I don't like him a bit now. You have spoiled me for everybody else. Do you want me to come on Friday as usual?"

"Do be quiet."

"What's the matter? You aren't dancing at all nicely and you haven't looked at me once this evening."

"No; don't come on Friday."

"Not——?"

Her voice was shrill with pain.

"No. That's all over."

She hung limp in his arms and her face was a ghastly yellow. She muttered:—

"Take me out. . . . I think I'm going to faint."

He half-carried her into the passage, where she sat on the stairs and began to cry. Neither of them noticed Clowes and the young man from the Detmold sitting above them.

"Don't cry!" he said roughly; "what have you got to cry about?"

"I never thought you only wanted me for that."

"You came to me. I didn't ask you to come."

"But I do love you so. I only want you to love me a little."

"I don't know how to love a little. When I love it is with the whole of me, and it is for always."

"But can't we be pals, just pals? We've been such pals."

"I'm sick to death of it all," he said violently, "sick to death. You're the best girl in London, Jessie, but it's no good—it's no good."

Clowes and the young man ostentatiously and with a great clatter went higher up the stairs, but neither Jessie nor Mendel heard them. The pain and the shame they were suffering absorbed them.

"I never thought," said Jessie, "it was near the end. I've always known when it was near the end before. It is like being struck by lightning."

Mendel was silent. He could do nothing. There was nothing to be said. Jessie had consoled him, comforted him, but she had only made his suffering worse. By the side of Morrison she simply did not exist, and it had been a lie to pretend that she did. That lie must be cut out.

"I never thought you only wanted me for that," she repeated, and began to move slowly down the stairs. At the bend she stopped and looked up at him, gave a little muffled cry, and moved slowly down into the dim lobby of the house.

Mendel gripped the banisters with both hands and shook them until they cracked.

"How horrible!" he muttered to himself, "how horrible!"

Upstairs, Clowes was boiling with rage. She lost all interest in her young man, and as soon as Mendel had returned to the room she raced downstairs, almost sobbing, and saying to herself:—

"That settles you, Master Kühler! That settles you!"

She darted across to Morrison, who had taken refuge in a corner, seized her by the hand and whispered:—

"Greta! Greta! I've just heard the most frightful thing. I couldn't help overhearing it and I ought not to tell anybody, but you ought to know. Kühler and Petrie! It must have been going on for months. He broke with her in the most cold-blooded way. It was heart-rending. I can't bear it. Oh! these men, these men!"

Morrison clenched her fists and her eyes blazed.

"Don't tell me any more!" she said. "Don't tell me any more!"

"I want to go home," whispered Clowes. "It is a dreadful party. That awful green woman spoils everything. It is like a nightmare to me now."

"It wouldn't be fair to go without telling him," said Morrison. "It wouldn't be fair."

"But you can't think of him after that," protested Clowes. "Oh! good gracious! There's Calthrop coming in. It is getting worse and worse."

Calthrop swung into the room with his magnificent stride. As usual, his entrance created a dramatic sensation. Logan, who had always decried his work, leaped to meet him and Mendel stood shyly waiting for his nod. . . . Whom would the great man speak to? That was the question. . . . He fixed his eyes on Oliver and strode up to her.

"You're the best-looking woman in the room," he said. "Do you like cinemas?"

"I adore them," said Oliver, with an excited giggle.

"Now, now's the chance!" whispered Clowes. "We can slip away now, before they begin drinking."

"I must tell him," replied Morrison, and, summoning up all her courage, she went up to Mendel and asked if she could speak to him. He went out with her, trembling in every limb.

"I am going," she said. "I have just heard something. Clowes overheard you and Jessie Petrie. She ought not to have told me. I don't know what I feel about it. Very wretched, chiefly. Please don't try to see me."

"I have told you what I am again and again," he said.

"Yes. You are very honest, but it is hard for a girl to imagine these things. Please, please see how hard it is and let me be."

"Very well," he answered, feeling that the whole world had come to an end. "Very well."

She called Clowes, who had stayed just inside the door, and together, like little frightened children, they crept downstairs.

"Good-bye, love!" said Mendel. "My God, what rubbish, what folly, what nonsense! Love and a Christian girl! That's over. That's finished. I am outside it all —outside, outside, outside. Oh! Dark and vile and bitter, and no sweetness anywhere but in my own thoughts!"

Inside the room some one began to sing:—

I want to be, I want to be,
I want to be down home in Dixie. . . .

Oh! the mad folly of these Christians, with their childish songs, their idiotic pleasures, their preposterous belief in happiness. . . . Happiness! They ruin the world to satisfy their childish longing, and all their happiness lies in words and foolish songs. . . . The rhythm of the pianola tunes began to beat in his head, and another deeper rhythm came up from the depths of his soul and tried to break through them. It was the same rhythm that always came up when he had reached the lowest depths of misery. It came gushing forth like water from the rock of Moses, and crept through his being like ice, up, up into his thoughts, bringing him to an intolerable agony.

In the room glasses clinked. He turned towards the light and plunged into the carouse.

CHAPTER VI

REVELATION

THREE weeks later the exhibition of Modern French Art was opened in an important gallery in the West End. It roused indignation, laughter, scorn, and made such a stir in the papers that public interest was excited and the exhibition was an unparalleled success. People from the suburbs, people who had never been to a picture gallery in their lives, flocked to see the show, and most of them, when they left, said: "Well, at any rate we've had a good laugh."

Mendel never read the papers and knew nothing at all about it. These three weeks had been a time of blank misery for him. He could not work. His people set his teeth on edge. He could not bear to see a soul, for he could not talk. When he met friends and acquaintances, not a word could he find to say to them. There was nothing to say. They were living in a world from which he had been expelled. More than once he was on the point of going to his father and asking to be taken into the workshop, since the only possible, the only bearable life was one of hard manual labour, which left no room for spiritual activity, none for happiness, and very little for unhappiness.

He found some consolation in going to the synagogue. His mother was delighted, but the religion was no comfort to him. What pleased him was to see the old Jews in their shawls and the women in their beaded gowns, praying each in their separate parts of the building—praying until they wept, and abasing themselves before the Lord. What woe, what misery they expressed! All the year round was this dismal wailing, and there was only happiness on the day that Haman was hanged. . . . It seemed good and decent to him that the sexes should be separate before the Lord, as they should be separate before the holy spirit that was in them. They should meet in holiness, hover for a moment above life, then sink back into it again to gather new strength. So love would be in its place. It could be gathered up and distilled. It would not be allowed to spread like a flood of muddy water over life, which had other passions, other delights, other glorious flowerings.

It had been a great day for him when, in a little shop near his home, he had come on a pair of wooden figures rudely carved by savages—African, the shopman said they were. Rurely carved, they were not at all realistic, but admirably simplified, the man and the woman sitting side by side naked. The man was wearing a little round bowler hat, while the woman was uncovered. They had the spirit and the idea that he most loved—the idea of man and woman sitting side by side, bound in love, unfathomably deep and unimaginably high, until one should follow the other to the grave.

He showed them to Golda, and told her they were she and his father.

"What next will you be up to?" she said. "Why, they are blackamoors."

"They are you and my father," he said, caressing the figures lovingly.

"I wish you would put the thought of that girl out of your head," she said tenderly. "It is making you so ill and so thin, and I dare not think what your father will say when he knows you are drinking again."

"Mother," he said, "when did you begin to love me?"

"When you were born," she said.

"Yes, yes. I know, as a cow loves its calf. But I mean *love,* for you do not love the others the same as me."

"You were not so very old when it came to me that you were different."

"But it is more now that I am a man?"

"Of course."

That settled his mind on the point that had been bothering him. Everywhere among the Christians love—the love that he knew and honoured—seemed to be lost in a soft, spongy worship of the mother's love for her child. The woman seemed to be wiped out of account altogether except as a mother. It seemed that she was not expected to love, and she was left by herself with the child, with the man looking rather foolish all by himself, seeing his strong, beautiful masculine love absorbed and given to the senseless little lump of flesh in the woman's arms. It was like discarding the flower for the seed, like denying the wonder of spring for the autumn fruit.

"If that is your Christian love," he said to himself, "I will have none of it."

He studied the Madonnas in the National Gallery, and they confirmed his impression of the weakness of Christian love, that left out the strong, vital love of a man for a woman, of a woman for a man. He characterised it as womanish, and could not see that the ideal had served to save women from male tyranny. Moreover, most of the pictures struck him as shockingly bad, which confirmed his notion that the ideal that inspired them was rotten.

He could not test his ideas by his experience with Morrison, for he dared not think of her at all. When his mother spoke of her, it had been like a sharp knife through his heart. . . . Yes. *That* was love, and it could not be bothered with the idea of children. If they came, it would make room for them, but it was not going to be robbed by them. Its object was the woman, and it detested any idea that got between it and her. . . . Yet when this love for Morrison stood between himself and his love for art, he hated her almost as violently. Sometimes he thought that he would kill her, because she stood there smiling. She was always smiling. She could be happy; she could so easily be happy. . . .

Logan came to fetch him to go to the exhibition.

"I don't want to go to the exhibition. I don't want to see other people's pictures. I want to paint my own."

"What are you working at?"

"Nothing."

"What's the matter?"

"Sex."

"Oh! That's always the matter with everybody."

"But I've thought of something."

"What?"

"Women don't love their children."

Logan roared with laughter, and he went on laughing because he enjoyed it. It was long since he had laughed so easily.

"Most of them do," he said. "Even if they've hated having them."

"They don't," said Mendel. "It's instinct just to gloat over them, just as one gloats over a picture one has just finished, however bad it may be. It has cost you something, and there is something to show for it. It is quite blind and stupid, like an animal. It is like lust. It is neither true nor false. It just *is,* chaotic and half-created. Love is a human thing. Love is the most human thing there is. When a clerk marries a girl because he wants a woman, I don't call that love. He is only making himself comfortable. There is a little more dirt in the world, that is all."

Logan laughed uncomfortably.

"Please listen," said Mendel. "I have been nearly mad this last fortnight, ever since the party. All my life seems to have broken its way into my mind, and I don't know when I shall be able to get it out again. It is very important that I should talk, and I have no one really to talk to except you. I am very lonely because I am a Jew and people do not understand me, or rather they think they understand me because I am a Jew. They think all Jews are the same. It is very rarely that I feel I am accepted as a man with thoughts, feelings, tears, laughter, tastes, bowels, senses like any other man."

"I know," said Logan sympathetically.

"How can you know? You have only to live in a world that is ready-made for you. I have to make mine as I go, step by step."

"That isn't because you are a Jew, but because you are an artist. It is the same for all of us."

"It can't be the same, for the ordinary world is not utterly foreign to you. You do not find that which you were brought up to believe, the wisdom you sucked in with your mother's milk, completely denied. . . . I tell you, love is all wrong, and because love is all wrong, art is all wrong, everything is wrong, and so is everybody. Everybody is living with only a part of himself, so that the cleverest people are the worst and most mischievous fools. I tell you, there are times in your West End when I can hardly breathe because people are such fools. If you are successful, they smile at you. If you are not successful, they look the other way. . . . Oh! I know it does not matter, but it makes success a paltry thing, and when you have lived for it and hungered for it, what then? What are you to do when it is like sand trickling through your fingers?"

"You can't stop it," said Logan. "You can't throw it away. You can only go on working, come what may."

"Yes," replied Mendel dubiously, and grievously disappointed. He had so hoped to squeeze out his twisted, tortured feelings into words, but at a certain point Logan failed him and seemed to shy at his thought. To a certain quality of passion in himself Logan was insensible. Where his own passion began to gain in clear force and momentum, swinging from the depths of life to the highest imagination, only gaining in strength as the ascent grew more arduous, Logan's remained in an exasperated intensity.

"I'm sorry," said Mendel. "Talking is no use. I've found my way out of as bad times as this, and shall again. It is no good talking. I will sit as silent as the little figures there, and in time I shall know what I must do."

"You want taking out of yourself," muttered Logan irritably. "Come and see Thompson's show."

As successful artists they entered the gallery self-consciously and rather contemptuously. That did not last long. There were many people sniggering at the Van

Goghs and the Picassos, but Mendel's thoughts flew back to a still-life he had painted of a blue enamel teapot and a yellow matchbox years ago. He had painted them as he had seen them, in raw, crude colour, but the picture had been so derided, and he had been so scornfully reminded that there were no brilliant colours in nature, that he had painted the same subject over again with a very careful rendering of what was called "atmosphere."

Here were crude colours indeed—almost, in many cases, as they came from the tubes, and as for drawing, there was hardly a trace of it, yet in the majority of the pictures there was a riotous freedom which rushed like a cleansing wind through Mendel's mind, and it seemed to him that here was the answer to many of his doubts—not a clear vision of art, but a roughly indicated road to it. It was absurd to sit cramping over rules and difficult technicalities when the starting-point of art lay so far beyond them. There was much rubbish in the show, but the works of Cézanne and Picasso were undeniably pictures. They were not flooded with a clear loveliness, like the pictures of Botticelli or Uccello, but they had beauty, and lured the mind on to seek another more mysterious beauty beyond them.

The two friends went through the exhibition in silence. As they left, Mendel asked:—

"Well! what did you think of it?"

"We're snuffed out," replied Logan despondently.

"Not I!" cried Mendel. "I'm only just beginning."

"I don't understand it yet. It has made my eyes and my head ache. At first it seemed to me too cerebral to be art at all, but there's no denying it, and it has to be digested. In a way it is what I have always been talking about. It has to do with the life we are living, which may not be much of a life, but it is ours and we find it good. It has not been a plunge into another world, like a visit to the National Gallery, but into some reality a little beyond this extraordinary jumble and hotchpotch of metropolitan life."

"It is painting," said Mendel. "That is enough for me. And they are not afraid of colour. Why should they be? The colours are there: why not use them? I'm going to."

And he went home and dashed off a savage mother with a green face thrusting a straw-coloured breast into the gaping red lips of a child.

So much for maternity and the Madonnas! He knew how a man loved his mother, and it was not in that milky way, setting her above nature, she who was tied and bound to natural, instinctive, animal life. If a man loved his mother, it was because with her it was the easiest thing in the world to be intimate and frank and honest and without pretence of any kind.

His mother was marvellous to him because she was his dearest friend, not because she had given him suck. That was a fact like any other, and facts were not marvellous until more and more light was thrown on them from the mind, for in the murk and muddle of human life they were distorted.

For Mendel this was the wildest and rarest adventure yet. It was a flinging of his cap over the windmills, and with it he had the sense of losing all his troubles, all his perplexities. Nothing for the time being seemed to matter very much. He had always been denied colour, and here he had the right to use it because it had been used by other men rightly. In the world of art, or rather of artists, he had always been a sort of Ishmael, ever since he had outgrown being a prodigy, and here was a new world of art where he could be free. . . . True, he had seen the same things in Paris and had not thought much of them, but so much had happened since then, and he had passed through the greatest crisis of his life.

Always after his crises he expected to find himself, and now he thought he had surely done so. He would be entirely free, completely independent.

For three weeks he lived between his studio and the gallery, studying these strange new vibrant pictures and experimenting with their manners as now this, now that painter influenced him. Picasso baffled him altogether. These queer, violent, angular patterns actually hurt him, and he was repelled by their intellectual intensity. Gauguin he found too easy, Van Gogh too incoherent. It was when he came to Cézanne that he was bowled out and reduced to impotence and all the egoistic excitement oozed out of him.

He was not so free then. Here was an art before which he must be humbled and subdued if he was to understand it at all. He abandoned his experiments and made no attempt to work at all, but bought a reproduction of Cézanne's portrait of his wife and spent many days poring over it. It held him and fascinated him, and yet it looked almost like the unfinished work of an amateur who could not draw. Of psychological interest the picture was bare. It was just a portrait of a woman at peace, with her hands folded in her lap, bathed in a serenity beyond mortal understanding, though not beyond mortal perception, since a man had rendered it in paint. It released directly the swift, soaring emotion which, though it was roused in him by many pictures and by some poetry—passages in the Bible, for instance—was quickly entangled in sensual pleasure and never properly set free. Here, the more he gazed the more that emotion, pure, disinterested, unearthly, rushed through him, exploring all the caverns in his imagination and delivering from them new powers of perception. He felt, as he told Logan afterwards, like a tree putting out its leaves in the spring.

And yet he could not tell how this miracle was accomplished. No words could explain it—abstraction, composition, design, none of these words helped at all. It was not so much the doing of the thing, the art of the painter, as the setting out of the woman on the canvas without reference to anything in heaven or earth, or any idea, or any emotion or desire. It was enough that she was a woman, not especially beautiful, not particularly remarkable. So perfect a vision had no need to be tender or affectionate or sensual, or to call in aid any of the emotions of life. It needed no force but the rare religious ecstasy which has no need of ideas or common human feelings, and this vision of a woman gave Mendel a new appreciation of life and love and art. It gave human beings a new value. It was enough that they were alive and upon the earth with all that they contained of good and evil. They were in themselves wonderful, and there was no need to worry about whence they came or whither they were going, or what was their relation to God and the universe. In each man, each woman was enough of God and of the universe to keep them poised for their little hour.

What, then, was love? What but the sense of being poised, of being borne up by God, an intimation that could only be won through contact with life at its purest. And beyond that again lay a further degree of purity which could only find expression in art, since life, even at its rarest, was too gross.

Often Mendel kissed his reproduction reverently and hugged it to his bosom, thinking childishly that some of its spirit could enter into him by contact. He whispered to it:—

"I love you. You are my truth and my joy rising up through life, even from its very depths, and shaking free of it at last into pure, serene beauty. You weigh neither upon my senses nor upon my thoughts, but, following you, they are joined together to become a high sense which can know deliverance."

Followed days of a supreme delight. He wandered through the streets seeing all men and all women and all things as wonderful, since through them all flowed his lovely spirit which in the few men here and there could find its freedom and its expression in form.

Through Thompson he met a journalist who was writing a book about the new painting, and from him he learned the little that was known about Cézanne: how he worked away experimenting unsuccessfully until he was middle-aged, and then withdrew from the world of artists in Paris, to live the life of a simple country bourgeois and to paint the vision which he had begun to divine: and how he painted out in the fields, leaving his canvases in the hedges and by the wayside, because not the painting but the expression of his spirit and the solution of his problem mattered to him: and how he never sold a single picture, never attempted to sell them.

Such, thought Mendel, should the life of an artist be. But how was it possible if life would not let him alone, but was perpetually dragging him down into the mud? What mud, what filth he had had to flounder through to get even so far as he had!

And already he began to feel that he was slipping back. He could not accept that knowledge of the spirit vicariously, but must fight for his own knowledge of it in direct contact with life. To endeavour to escape from life was to isolate himself, to lose the driving force of life from darkness into the light, to dwell in the twilight of solitude armed only with his puny egoism and the paltry tricks of professional painting. He felt that at last he knew his desire, but in no wise how to attain it. Cézanne had had a wife: that had settled one of the torments of life. He had had ample means: that had absolved him from the ever-present difficulty of money.

These considerations relieved Mendel from another weighty puzzle. Perhaps if Cézanne had had to please other people and not only his own spirit, he would have cared more for his craft and for the quality of his paint. . . . All the same, it was good to have pictures reduced to their bare essentials, relieved of ornament and trickery, and yet retaining their full pictorial quality.

Shortly after the party Logan and Oliver had moved to a little cottage on Hampstead Heath, just below Jack Straw's Castle. Mendel went to see them there and met Logan on the Spaniard's Road. He was in a deplorable condition. His right eye was blackened, his nose was bloody and scratched, the lobe of his ear was torn and his forehead was purple with bruises.

"What on earth have you been doing to yourself!" asked Mendel.

"I've had a fight," said Logan glibly. "The other night on the Heath I came on a man beating a girl. I went for him. He was a huge lout of a man. We had a terrific tussle, and just as I was getting him down the girl went for me and scratched my face."

"If you lived where I do," said Mendel, "you would know better than to interfere."

"Oh! I enjoyed it," said Logan. "I couldn't stand by and see it done."

They ran down the grassy slope to the cottage, where they found Oliver entertaining Thompson and her critic. She had a slight bruise over her right eye, and Mendel thought:—

"Why does he lie? Why should he lie to me? I should think no worse of him for beating her. If I could not shake her off I should kill her."

He was filled with a sudden disgust at the household, which in his eyes had become an obscene profanation.

The talk was excited, and formerly he would have found it interesting. Thompson was full of the triumph of the exhibition and its success in forcing art upon the public. He spoke glibly of abstraction and cubing, and it was clear that they only delighted him as new tricks.

Oliver took part in the conversation. She had picked up the jargon of painters and made great play with the names of the new masters. To hear her talking glibly of Cézanne and saying how he had shown the object of pictorial art to be pattern filled Mendel's soul with loathing. He could not protest. What was the good of protesting to such people? . . . If only Logan had not been among them! He wanted to talk to Logan, to tell him what this new thing meant, to make him see that he must give up all thought of turning art back upon life, because life did not matter so very much. It could look after itself, while the integrity of art must at all costs be maintained.

However, when Thompson said that the artist was now free to make up a picture out of any shapes he liked, Mendel could not contain himself, and said:—

"The artist is no more free than ever he was. He does not become free by burking representation. He is not free merely to work by caprice and fantasy. He is rather more strictly bound than ever, because he is working through his imagination and cannot get out of it merely by using his eyes and imitating charming things. If he tries to get out of it by impudent invention, then pictures will be just as dull and degraded as before."

"'I am Sir Oracle,'" said the critic, "'and when I ope my lips let no dog bark.'"

"You can bark away," cried Mendel, "but you must not complain if a man loses patience with you and kicks you back into your kennel."

"Just listen to the boy!" cried Oliver. "Success has turned his pretty little head. Just listen to him teaching the critics their business!"

Mendel gave her a furious look of contempt and left the room and the house. Logan came running after him.

"I say, old man," he said, "you mustn't mind what she says. Those damn fools have stuffed her head up with their nonsense and she hasn't the brains of a louse."

"If it was my house, I would kick them out."

"They are good fellows enough."

"Good fellows! When they make her more idiotic and blatant than she is!"

"I can't think what made you so angry. There was nothing to flare up about. You are so touchy."

Mendel was walking at a furious pace. Logan was out of condition and had to beg him to go more slowly.

"I'm all to bits," said Logan. "That row——"

"Why do you tell lies? It was she who mauled you. Why do you tell lies to me? I have never told lies to you about anything. You have always jeered at women and said they can know nothing about art, and yet you let her talk. . . . Why don't you leave her?"

"We're very fond of each other," replied Logan. "It has gone too deep. We hate each other like poison sometimes, but that only makes it—the real thing—go deeper."

"I can't bear it," said Mendel; "I can't bear it. It was bad enough when she kept quiet, but now that she gives herself airs and talks, I can't stand it. I hate her so that I feel as if the top of my head would blow off. . . . Perhaps there was nothing much in what she said. Perhaps it was only a slow growing detestation coming to a head. But there it is. It is final. I have tried to like her, to be decent to her, to make allowances for her, but it is impossible."

"You don't mean you are not going to come to see us again?"

"Yes. That is what I do mean. She doesn't exist for me any longer. If I met her in a café or in the streets she would be all right. She would be in her place. There would be some truth in her. In connection with you she is a festering lie."

"She can't settle down to it," replied Logan lamely, ashamed of his inability to defend Oliver from this onslaught. Defence would be quite useless, for he knew that Mendel would detect his untruth. If only Mendel were a little older, if only he could have grown out of youth's dreadful inability to compromise.

"She can't settle down," Logan continued. "She is a creature of enormous vitality and she has no life outside herself, no imagination. Can't you see that her vitality has no outlet? I don't know, but it seems to me appalling to think of these modern women with their independence, and nothing at all to do with it. They won't admit the authority of the male, and they have broken out of the home. A lot of them refuse to have children. I feel sorry for them."

"Don't go on talking round and round the subject," cried Mendel wrathfully. He was really alarmed and pained as he saw himself being carried nearer and nearer to a breach with his friend. "I can't feel sorry for her and I don't. She is ruining you. You never laugh nowadays. You are always more dead than alive, and I cannot bear to see you with her. I cannot bear even to think of you with her."

"For God's sake, don't talk like that!" muttered Logan, quickening his pace to keep up, for Mendel was flying along.

"You must either give her up or me," said Mendel.

"Don't say that!" pleaded Logan; "don't say that! I can't get on without you. I don't see how I can get on without you. All the happiness I have ever had has come through you. Every hope I have is centred in you. If you go, life will become nothing but work, work, work, with nobody to understand. Nobody. . . . And I have been so full of hope. All this new business has made such a stir and has brought such life into painting that I had begun to feel that anything was possible. There might be even a stirring of the spirit to stem the tide of commercialism. You know what my life has been—one long struggle to find a way out of the pressure of vulgarity and sordid money-making, out of sentimentality and pretty lying fantasy, out of the corruption that from top to bottom is eating up the life of the country. You know that when I met you I had almost given up the struggle in despair. One man alone could not do it. But two men could—two men who trusted and believed in each other. . . . You were very young when I first met you, but you have come on wonderfully. It has been thrilling for me to watch the growth of your mind and the strengthening of your character. You are the only man I ever met who could really stand by himself. . . . It isn't easy for me to say all this, but I must tell you what your friendship has meant to me."

The more Logan talked, the more he divulged his feelings, his very real affection, the more Mendel's mind was concentrated on the one purpose, to get him away from Oliver.

"You must give her up," he said.

"I can't," gasped Logan.

They stood facing each other, Mendel staring into his friend's eyes that looked piteously, wearily, miserably out of his haggard, battered face. He could not endure it, and he could not yield to the entreaty in Logan's eyes.

He turned quickly and ran to a bus which had stopped a few yards in front. He rushed up the steps and was whirled away. Unable to resist turning round, he saw Logan standing where he had left him, with his head bowed, his shoulders hunched up, a figure of shameful misery.

After some minutes of numbness, of trying to gather up the threads snapped off by his astonishment at the quickness of the affair, Mendel began to tremble. His hands and his knees shook, and he could not control them. It was only gradually that he began to realise how strong his feelings had been, and how great the horror and the shock of knowing through and through, without blinking a single fact, the terrible relationship that bound Logan and Oliver—tied together in an insatiable sensuality, locked in a deadly embrace, like beasts of prey fighting over carrion: a furious, evil conflict over a dead lust. . . . At the same time he knew that he was bound with them, that in their life together he had his share, and that it was dragging him down, down from the ecstatic exaltation he had perceived in his new friend, Cézanne, a friend who could never fail, a friend upon whom no devastation could alight, a friend through whom he could never be clawed back into life.

By the time he reached home he was completely exhausted, and begged his mother to make him a cup of strong tea.

"What is it now?" Golda asked. "What is the trouble? There is always something new, and I think you will never be a man. For a man expects trouble and does not make himself ill over it."

"I have quarreled with Logan," said Mendel, dropping with relief into Yiddish as a barrier against the outer world, in which terrible things were always happening.

"A good job too!" said Golda; "a good job too! He was no good to you. He only made you do the work that nobody likes. Now you can go back to the old way, and Mr. Froitzheim and Mr. Birnbaum will be pleased with you again. . . . You had better give up your friends. You are like a woman, the way you must always be in love with your friends. . . . But it is no good. Men will always fall in love, and then it is over with friendship. . . . Friends are only for moments. They come and disappear and come again. It is foolish to think you can keep them. . . . Is your head bad?"

"Pretty bad."

"You have not been drinking again?"

"No. I've been leading a decent life. I expect it doesn't suit me."

"Rubbish. . . . Rosa says the Christian girl has been to see you."

He leaped to his feet.

"Didn't she stay? Didn't you make her stay? What did she say? How did she look? Did she leave no message?"

Golda smiled at him.

"You had better go and see," she said.

He darted from the room and across to his studio panting with excitement, persuading himself at every step that she was there, waiting for him, perhaps hiding to tease him, for she was a terrible tease.

By the time he reached his studio he was so convinced that she was there that he hardly dared open the door. He pushed it open very gently and peered in. The room was empty, but he felt sure that she was there. He peeped round the corner into his bedroom. She was not there. He had to believe it, and came dejectedly back into the studio.

On his painting-table were autumn flowers daintily arranged in the old jug he used for a vase. He buried his face in them. She was there! She was there in the sweetness and fragrance of the flowers.

CHAPTER VII

CONFLICT

MORRISON had fought bravely through her storms and difficulties. She frightened Clowes with the violence of her efforts and the terrible strain she inflicted on her vitality. There were times when she thought the simplest way would be to cut adrift from all her old associations and to throw in her lot with Mendel, to give him his desire and so save him from the terrible life he was leading. But that was too drastic, too simple. She could only have done it on a great impulse, but always her deepest feelings shrank from it, and without her deepest feelings she could not go to him, for they were engaged most of all. . . . She felt cramped and confined, as though her love were a cord wound round and round her limbs, and she could not, she would not go to him bound. He must release her; she must compel him to release her. If it took half her lifetime she would so compel him. Her will was concentrated upon him. She would not have their love droop from the high sympathy it had known, nor should it be torn from it by his savage strength and the adorable violence of his passion. Neither, on the other hand, would she turn back from him. That would be to deny her freedom which she had bought so dearly. She had thought her freedom would give her the easy joy of flowers and clouds and birds, and she still believed in that easy joy, but it lay beyond the tangled web of this love for the strange, dark, faunlike creature whom she had found in the woods. If she turned back, if she denied the urgent emotions that drove her on, she had nothing to turn to but the old captivity, the life where all difficulties were arranged for, where all roads led to marriage, where men could only talk to women in a half-patronising, half-flirtatious way that led to a ridiculous meeting of the senses, then to an engagement, and so to church. To that she would never, never return. She had fought her way out of it. She had learned to live by herself, within herself, to wrestle with her thoughts and emotions and to get them into shape. (It had been at a great cost to her external tidiness and orderliness, but that too she hoped to tackle in time.) She had won all this, and she had found a glorious outlet in work. So far as she had gone she had been successful, and she was ambitious, terribly ambitious, to show that a woman could do good work.

And then there was the dark side of Mendel's life—Logan, Oliver, Jessie Petrie. At the thought of it she shuddered, but her honesty made her confess that it made no difference to her central feeling. It had shocked her, outraged her, roused her to a fury of jealousy, but that she would not have. She fought it down inch by inch until she had it so well in control that, whenever it reared its head, she could crush it down.

Many a tear had it cost her, but she insisted that she must understand.

When she cut her hair short, she found, to her horror, that it was taken by many men as a sign that she was open to their advances, and all sorts and conditions of men had found to their astonishment that, although she was an artist and lived an independent life, she was immovable, and when it came to argument she was more than a match for them.

Again, she had had the confidence of more than one of the models, and she knew how they courted their own disasters. If there was to be any question of blame, the women must share it with the men.

She had no thought of blaming Mendel, but she hated to have that underworld in contact with the world which it was her whole desire to keep beautiful. It was no good pretending that the underworld was not there, but if she could have her way she would keep a tight control over it, and suppress it as she suppressed her jealousy, that other source of ugliness. If she could only, somehow, find an entrance to Mendel's life, not only to his rare moments, but to the life that went on from day to day, she would suppress it, she would cut it out and throw it away. She thought of it almost as a surgical operation, or as cutting a bruise out of an apple, for all her thoughts of life were as simple as herself, and life too was simple in her eyes. Anything that threatened to complicate it she expunged.

After a time she discovered that it was no good hoping to understand so long as she regarded the dark aspect of Mendel from outside his life. She must find her way inside it and see how it looked there. That was hard.

Clowes could not help her at all. To Clowes it was simply unintelligible that men could do these things. They bewildered her, and her only way out of it was to suppose that men were like that, and the less said about it the better. She was really very annoyed with Morrison for worrying over it, and she was disappointed. She had hoped that the unfortunate adventure would be over and that Morrison would wait tranquilly for her affections to be engaged by some one who was—presentable. . . . Still, there was no accounting for this strange, impulsive creature, though it was a pity she should throw away her growing popularity with people who were, after all, important, both in themselves and by their position; for Morrison's frank charm carried her to places where Clowes would have given her eyes to be seen. Clowes was baffled by her friend, but she would not abandon her. She was often bored with her, often exasperated, and more than once she said:—

"Well, if you like these wild people so much, why don't you take the plunge and join them? You are wild enough yourself."

"I'm not wild in that way," replied Morrison. "And I know that if I did do it it would be wrong."

And she returned to her task of labouring to understand Mendel. She carried the idea of him wherever she went, and was sometimes able to call up a clear image of him, and she was fearful for him because he seemed to her so helpless, so much a stranger in a strange land, so easily caught up in any strong current of feeling or enthusiasm. . . . She, too, often felt outside things, but she so much enjoyed being a looker-on. She loved to watch the race among the young artists, and she longed for Mendel to win. It was right that he should win, because he was so much the best of them all. He had taken the lead. It had looked as though he must infallibly win, and then Logan had appeared and he had stumbled in his stride.

Yet this had never been satisfying. She had no right to turn Mendel into a figure on a frieze, to see him in the flat, as it were, and it was in revolt against this conception that she had agreed to go with him to Logan's party, which had been so disastrous. . . . Had she not been cowardly to run away? But what could she do, what else could she do, when confronted so suddenly with the appalling fact?

A week before the party Mendel had insisted on lending her "Jean Christophe" volume by volume. She had read the first without great interest. The friendship between the two boys struck her as silly and sentimental and not worth writing about, and she had read no further. However, when she found that Mendel was becoming a fixed idea, to escape from it she took up the second volume, and was enthralled by the tale of Christophe's love for Ada, thrilled by the sudden scene of his assault on the peasant girl in the field, and with a growing sense of illumination followed his life as it passed from woman to woman, finding consolation with one, relief with another, comfort with another, comradeship with yet another, and the physical relationship slipped into its place and was never dominant. And Christophe, too, had had women of passage because his vitality was so abundant that it could not be contained in his being. It must be always flowing out into art or into life, taking from life more and more power to give to art. . . . With Gratia she was out of patience. Gratia was altogether too complacent an Egeria. Morrison thought she could have given Christophe more than that.

She made Clowes read the book, but Clowes found it no help. That was in a story, this was actually happening in London; and besides, the book had a rhapsodic, dreamlike quality that smoothed away all ugliness, all difficulties. In life things were definitely ugly, and it was no good pretending they were anything else.

"Anyhow," said Morrison, "I'm going on."

"You are going to see him again?"

"Yes, I will not be beaten. If I were married to him I should put up with everything, and I don't see why not being married should make any difference."

Clowes threw up her hands and said:—

"Well, if you come to grief, don't blame me."

"I'm not going to come to grief," said Morrison. "I'm going to win—I'm going to win."

It was then that she went out and bought the flowers. Her courage nearly failed her as she approached the door in the little slummy street. Suppose he should be angry with her for running away, and contemptuous of her cowardice! His anger and contempt were not easy things to face.

She was relieved, therefore, when the dirty little Jewish servant opened the door and told her Mendel was out. She handed in the flowers shyly and went away without a word.

Mendel wrote to thank her for the flowers, but said nothing about going to see her or about what he was doing. She thought he must be contemptuous of her, though it was not like him to be so stupid as not to respond to a direct impulse. On the other hand, he had always tried to impose his authority on her, and she was not going to do his bidding. Either he must take her on her own level or not at all. She would make him understand that she too was driving at something, and that love was to her not an end in itself, much though she might desire love and its freedom. He had always made her feel that he regarded love as sufficient for her. She must curl up in it and be happy while he went on with his work. Against that all the free instinct in her cried out. A woman was not a mere embryo to be incubated in a man's passion, hatched out into a wife and a helpmate. . . . When she tried to imagine what life with him would be like, she shivered until she thought what life with him might be if she could bring to it all her force and all her freedom.

At last she began to think that perhaps it was her own fault for not having left a note or a message with the flowers, which might be regarded only as a token of sentimental forgiveness. She knew how easily he was sickened by any sign of Christian sentimentality—"filthy gush" as he called it. . . . To safeguard against that and to have done with it once and for all, she wrote to him and told him that she had been reading "Jean Christophe," and that it had helped her to understand both his sufferings and his need of what in an ordinary foolish vain man would have to be condemned.

To this letter he did not reply, and she determined that she would go and see him. She would take Clowes, in case things had become impossible and their sympathy had somehow been undermined and destroyed. Even if it were, she would not accept or believe it, and she would fight to restore it. A vague intuition took possession of her by which she surely knew that something strange, perhaps even terrible, was happening to him, and she felt that he needed her but did not know his need.

It required some persuasion to take Clowes down to Whitechapel. She declared that she would stand by her friend whatever happened, but that she did not wish to be personally mixed up in it. It would, she said, make her in part responsible for whatever happened, and she did not think she could bear it. However, Morrison explained that she only wanted her there in case things were impossible, and that, if they were not, she could make good her escape as soon as she liked. On that Clowes consented and they journeyed to the East End.

The little Jewish servant said that Mr. Mendel was engaged. Would she go up and see if he would soon be disengaged? She ran upstairs and came down in a moment to ask if they would wait, and to their surprise, darted past them, along the street, beckoned to them to follow, and led them to Golda's kitchen. Golda bobbed to them, dusted chairs for them to sit on, and, not knowing enough English to be able to talk to them, went on with her ironing. When she had finished that, she shyly produced an album and showed them all the photographs of Mendel since he was a baby.

Meanwhile, in his studio Mendel was in agitated conversation with Mr. Tilney Tysoe, who had arrived half an hour before, wagging his hands, rolling his enormous eyes, almost demented by the lamentable news he had to tell. Logan had left Oliver!

"When?" asked Mendel.

"A few days ago," said Tysoe. "The poor fellow came round to me one night after dinner. You know, he often drops in in the evening. Such a splendid fellow, so sincere, such a force! And his admiration for you is very touching. He came in and raved like a madman and said terrible things—oh, terrible things! He told me that I was a fool and did not know a picture from my foot, and he denounced himself as a scoundrel and a thief and a liar. He wanted me to destroy all the pictures I had bought from him, and said they were not worth the stretchers of the canvas they were painted on. . . . Oh! it was terrible, terrible! He said that for years he had been pulling my leg, and had got such a taste for it that he had begun to pull his own leg, and he went on to say that his soul was rotten with lies; and then he broke into a torrent of wild, splendid stuff that made my spine tingle. I assure you, I could not contain my enthusiasm.

. . . Oh! he is a splendid fellow. . . . I can't remember it all very well, but he said that love is impossible in the world as it is, and that everybody is living in hate. It sounded most true—most true—though you know I adore my wife. . . . He said that humanity has tried aristocracy and failed, and it has tried democracy and failed. It has swung from one extreme to the other and found satisfaction in neither, and now it must bend the two extremes together so as to get the electric spark which can illumine life, and also to create a circle in which life can be contained. Of course, I haven't got it at all clear, but it was most inspiring—most inspiring. Certainly life is very unsatisfactory, and it must be maddening for artists, maddening, though of course it should drive them on to make a mighty effort. We are all looking to the artists nowadays, especially since that wonderful exhibition."

"Yes, yes," said Mendel impatiently; "but what about Logan?"

"He told me you had quarrelled with him. Such a pity! Dear me! dear me! You were such a splendid pair, so sincere. He said it was irrevocable. But, you know, 'The falling out of faithful friends renewing is of love.' Have you read the Oxford 'Book of Verse'? A storehouse of poetry. . . . I came to see you for that reason. Quarrels ought not to be irrevocable. . . . I have been to see Oliver too. Poor girl! poor girl! I am keeping their little nest at Hampstead for them. . . . I told Logan he ought to marry her. Of course, I know, artists have their own view on that subject, but there is a great deal to be said for marriage. Most people are married, you know, and a woman who is not married must feel out of it. Nothing to do with morality, of course, but you know what women are. They can't bear even their clothes to be different, and, after all, marriage is only a garment which we wear for decency's sake."

"But where is Logan?"

"That I don't know," said Tysoe. "Oliver said he would be here. She said it was your fault that they had quarrelled. . . . Poor girl! So pretty too! . . . I thought if you made it up with Logan, then he could make it up with her and we should all be happy again. We might have a nice little dinner of reconciliation at my house."

"It is no use, no use whatever," said Mendel. "Logan might go back to her, but he will never come back to me. We have gone different ways, not only in life, but in our work."

"You won't make it up?" asked Tysoe plaintively.

"No," answered Mendel. "I should like to, but it is impossible. It is very good of you to try to intervene. Logan was my friend. He is no longer the same man. He is altered, he is changed, he is done for."

"Nothing could ruin a man like that. It is disastrous, it is terrible that he should lose his friend and the girl he loves at one stroke. Kühler, I implore you, I entreat you, if he comes to see you, you will not refuse him."

"If he comes I will see him, certainly," said Mendel.

"Ah! That is all I want," said Tysoe, beaming hopefully.

"But he will not come."

"We shall find a way. We shall find a way. . . . Ah! superb!" he added, catching sight of Mendel's green-faced *Mother*. "Ah! The new spirit at work in your art. Colour! What you have always wanted! . . . How—how much?"

"Ten pounds," said Mendel.

"May I take it with me? I will send you my cheque."

Mendel wrapped the picture up in brown paper and gave it him, told him he must go, thanked him for his kindness, and with unutterable relief watched him go shambling down the stairs.

It was very certain that Logan would not come. There could be nothing but futile suffering for both of them, and Logan would know that as well as he. Logan knew himself better than most men, and he must have felt the finality of that parting in the street. The breach was final and irrevocable, for Oliver was definitely a part of Logan, as much a part of him as his hand or his eyes, and Mendel hated Oliver with a pure, simple, immovable passion. He saw in her embodied the natural enemy of all that he loved: order, decency, honesty, art, and beauty. He would have liked to blot out all trace of her everywhere, but she lived most intensely in his mind. She existed for him hardly at all as a person, but as an evil, fixed will set on the destruction of Logan, of friendship, of art, of love, of beauty, of everything that lived distinctly and clearly and with a flame-like energy. She existed to drag all down into the glowing ashes of lust and lies. There were times when she became symbolical of that Christian world that had made him suffer so intensely. In her was the only discernible will of that world in which everything was losing shape and form, every flame was dying down, and everything, good and bad, was being reduced to ashes.

"Good and bad?" thought Mendel. "I don't know what they mean. I know what is false and what is true. What is false I hate. What is true I love. That woman is a lie and I hate her, and I wish she were dead."

Logan might hate her too, but he would always try, always hope to love her, always waste himself in trying to kindle her lust into a passion. The fool, the weak fool! Let her rot; let her drop down to her own level, where she could be decently a beast of prey, marked out to be shunned except by those who were her natural victims. Logan was too good: but if there was so much good in him, might not something be done? . . . No. Only Logan's own will could save him. Nothing could be done for him except out of pity: and who wants pity? Leave that to men like Tysoe, the kindly, emasculate fools of the world.

Yet mendel knew that he was bound to Logan. At first he thought it must be by pity, but it was deeper than that. There was not much capacity for pity in Mendel. Ruthless with himself, he could see no reason why others should be spared what he himself was ready to endure. He had never thought that others might be weaker than he. Logan, for instance, with ten years' more experience behind him, had always seemed infinitely stronger.

And so Logan had left Oliver! There must have been a terrible row. . . . Oh, well, he would go back to her. There would be no end to the affair, there could be no end unless Logan were strong enough to stand by himself. But when had he ever tried to do that? Even in his work he borrowed here and there. Mendel was sure now that all Logan's work had grown out of his own, and was often, by some amazing sleight of mind, an anticipation of his own ideas. That explained a good deal: his growing sense that Logan was really his enemy, and was cramping and thwarting him, a sense that endured even after the quarrel. It was strong upon him now. Tysoe had brought Logan vividly to his mind and made him feel impotent, possessed by a vision of art but unable to move a step towards it, rather dragged further and further away from it. He was ashamed when he thought of how often he had excitedly followed Logan's lead, only to come now to this discovery that he was brought back to his own inchoate ideas. . . . He was reminded oddly of the journalist who had interviewed him after his first success and had produced so grotesque a parody of his innocently conceited remarks.

A tap at the door reminded him of the "two young ladies" who were waiting to see him. He rushed eagerly to the door and flung it open, thinking to find healing and refreshment in the sight of Morrison. Only Clowes was standing there, and in his disappointment her face seemed to him so foolish and flabby and idiotic that his impulse was to shut the door. . . . He would bang the door in her face and it would shut out the Christian world for ever. It did not want him, and he did not want it, for it was full of lies. . . . Then he heard a footstep on the stairs and Morrison appeared.

"Come in," he said. "Come in."

"I can't stay long," said Clowes nervously.

"All right," he replied.

Morrison reached the top of the stairs, and he stood looking at her.

"How are you?"

"I'm very well."

She was horrified at the change in him. He looked so tragic and drawn.

"Clowes can't stop long," she said. "But I'll stop, if I may. I should like to."

"I'm afraid I haven't got anything to show you. I haven't been working lately."

"It seems to be a pretty general complaint," said Clowes. "Everybody is so upset by the French pictures.

I should like to shake that Thompson until his teeth rattled. He is so pleased with himself."

"He's an awful man," muttered Mendel. "He seems to think he told Cézanne and Van Gogh how to do it. There seems to be a whole army of men ready to take the credit of a thing when some one else has done it. I suppose they are all talking like mad."

"What is so astonishing is that these things are actually selling, and people who never sold a picture in their lives dab a few straight lines on a picture and off it goes."

Mendel laughed.

"I've just sold one," he said. "I came straight back from the exhibition and painted it. They sell just as if they were a new kind of toy that is all the rage."

So they kept up a cheerful rattle of conversation until Clowes said she really must go. No; she would not have tea, but she hoped Mendel would come to tea with her one day.

He saw her to the front door and ran upstairs again, three steps at a time.

"Now, then," he said, "what have you come for, and why did you bring her?"

"In case there was nothing to be said and this visit was another failure. I'm sick of failure; aren't you?"

"I didn't answer your letter. I thought it was all over."

"But I told you what had made me change."

"It was nothing to do with that. Everything seemed all over, and I'm not sure even now that it isn't."

"I knew something was happening to you. What is it?"

"I've quarrelled with Logan."

She was silent for a moment or two, and then she said:—

"I'm so glad."

"You didn't like him. Why?"

"I thought him second-rate."

"He isn't that. He has a good mind, and he was a good friend."

"Are you so sure of that?"

"Of some things in him—of his affection, for instance—I am as sure as I am of myself."

She smiled at him.

"Yes. That is saying a good deal. But why did you quarrel?"

"It was over his woman."

"Oh yes!"

"He has left her."

"Has he been to see you?"

"No. It was a friend of his. I don't know what will happen. They are bound to come together again. Perhaps they will go through life like that—parting and coming together again. I can't get it out of my head. I shall never forget it. It is like my father knocking a drunken soldier down with a glass. I never forget that, though it was different. That was just something that I saw. This is in my own life. I feel as though it had somehow happened through me. I was with him when he met her, you know, and his whole life changed when he met me. Perhaps he wasn't meant to take things seriously. . . . I didn't write to you because I didn't want to drag you into it. But I'm glad you've come. I'm glad you've come. . . . You know, it was beginning to be a horror with me that Logan would come in at that door, looking like a poor, battered, broken little Napoleon, and I should have to tell him that I was not his friend. . . . You know, he was something vital and living in my work, but Cézanne has kicked him out. He was only my friend really in my work, and if that goes everything goes. I couldn't explain it to him, for he wouldn't understand. He used to laugh at me for talking about my work to you. I'm afraid I told him more about you than I ought to have done, but, you see, he was my friend. He laughed at everything. He ought to have been a very happy man, the way he laughed at everything."

He placed in her hands his reproduction of Cézanne's portrait of his wife.

"That's better than Cranach," he said.

"But why is her mouth crooked?" asked Morrison, puzzled by the picture and by his setting it above Cranach.

"I don't know," replied Mendel, "but Cézanne knew when he did it."

And he tried to explain the making of the picture, but she could not understand it. However, she could understand and love his enthusiasm, and they were both happy, talking rather aimlessly and often relapsing into silence.

"I never can make out," he said, "why you are more wonderful to me than anybody else. Directly I am with you, I am not so much happy as free. Even if I am miserable and you don't make me any happier, I want you with me. . . . You mustn't go away again."

"No. I don't want to go away."

"Why need you actually go? Why shouldn't you stay here now? Stay with me. Don't go. Don't think of going. I want you always with me. . . . If you don't like the place we will find another studio and go there. And if you want to be married we can get married at once. I have nearly a hundred pounds in the bank."

He knelt by her side and held her knees in his two hands. She took his face in her hands and said gently:—

"You mustn't talk like that, Mendel. Please don't think I don't love you because I don't want you to talk like that. It is the first thing to come into your mind, but with me it is almost the last thing. I want love to be very, very beautiful before it comes to me. I want love to be as beautiful to me as that picture of Cézanne's is to you. Do you understand me?"

He sprang to his feet and turned away from her.

"No, I don't!" he shouted; "no, I don't!"

He was wildly angry. Her words had acted like salt upon his raw feelings.

"No, I don't understand you. You want love to be like art. You want to mix love up with art. Love belongs to life. Love is rich and ripe and warm. You want it to be like the dew on the grass. It can't be!—it can't be! Love bursts out of a man's body into his soul, and you want it to live in his soul and to leave him with an impotent, cold body. You want me to bend to your woman's will, for you know I cannot break away from you. You are with your soul like Oliver with her body. You are with your love like Oliver with her lust, and Logan and I are a pair—a miserable, broken pair."

"Oh!" she cried, hiding her face in her hands. "You are wrong, wrong, hideously wrong. You have understood nothing at all. Your mind has rushed away with you. For God's sake be quiet for a little, to see if we can't get it straight."

His desire was to batter down her opposition, yet he could not but realise that she was too strong, and that he would only do grievous and useless harm. He controlled himself, therefore, and was silent. At last he grunted:—

"Can't you make me see what you mean?"

"It isn't a thing I could say in cold blood," she said.

He moved towards her, but she held up her hands to ward him off.

"No, no!" she almost whispered. "That only makes my heart grow colder and colder until it aches."

"Do you mean that you—don't—want me?"

"Foolish, foolish, foolish!" she said. "If you loved me one tenth part as much as I love you, you would know what I mean."

"I don't," he said simply. "I don't, honestly I don't. Perhaps you are so beautiful to me that I am blinded with it."

Of the truth of her feeling against him he had no doubt, but though he laboured bitterly to understand it, he could make nothing of it. He was driven back on his simple need for her.

"Very well," he said; "if it makes you feel like that for me to touch you, I never will. Only don't talk of loving me more than I love you. It isn't true."

"Yes. It was silly of me to say that," she agreed. "It isn't true."

"What do you want, then?"

"I want to share as much of your life as I can."

"It is a bleak, grimy business, a good deal of it."

"I want to share it."

"There is a good deal in it that will horrify you."

"I must get used to that. . . . When I am in London I want you to promise that you will see me at least once a week."

"There are seven days in the week. Let it be seven times."

She laughed at that.

"And some day," she went on, "I want to take you down into the country."

He began to suspect her of wanting to meddle with his work.

"I don't want the country," he rapped out. "I am a Londoner. All the life I care about is in the streets and in the houses, in the restaurants and the shops, and the costers' barrows and the cinemas and the picture galleries. That is why I live here, because I love the coarse, thrumming vitality all round me."

"But *I* want the country," she said, "and you should know the life *I* love."

For a moment it seemed to him that the key to the mystery she talked of was in his hands. He clutched at it and it evaded him, but his idolatry of her was shaken, and he began dimly to see her as a creature like himself, with feelings, thoughts, desires, and a will. There was no doubt at all about the will, and he had to recognise it.

CHAPTER VIII

OLIVER

THEN began a period of quiet, happy friendship for them both. Mendel was astonishingly amenable to many of her disciplinary suggestions and allowed her to cut his hair (though not without thinking of Delilah), and when she ordered him to get some new clothes he went off obediently to a friend of Issy's and had a suit made—West End style at East End prices.

"You will soon have me looking like a Public School gentleman," he said.

"Never!" she replied. "You will never move like one—thank goodness."

"Why thank goodness?"

"Because they walk about as though they owned the earth and the fatness thereof, as though the earth existed for them to walk about on it without their needing even to look at it to see how beautiful it is."

"That's like Logan," he said. "He used always to be railing against the English. He said they had no eyes, only stomachs. But I think the English must be the nicest people in the world, for there is no place like London for living in."

Indeed, they both thought there could be no place like London. Once or twice a week they dined together at the Pot-au-Feu and went on to a party or to a music-hall or to the cinema, which he adored. He said it gave him ideas for pictures and that there were often wonderful momentary pictures thrown on the screen.

"The cinema does what the bad artists have been trying to do for generations. It is a great relief to have it done by a machine. The artist need not any more try to be a machine. There is no need for him now to please the public. He can leave all that to the machine and go straight for art. The few decent people will follow him, and what more does he want? Art is not for the fools. . . . Logan was wrong. He wanted art to go to the people. That is all wrong. The people must come up to art. When they are sick of the machine, art is there, ready for them." He added naïvely, "I shall be there, waiting for them."

He loved especially the dramas, when they were not clogged and obscured with sentimentality. The simple values that governed them, the triumph of virtue and the downfall of evil, appealed to him as solid, as related to a process, a drama, that went on in himself, and, he supposed, in everybody else. It worried and annoyed him when Morrison made fun of these values and jeered at them.

"But things don't work like that," she protested.

"I think they do," he said.

"Good people are often crushed," she replied, "and bad people often have things all their own way."

"But it is inside people that it happens like that. False people have their souls eaten away with lies, and true people have free, happy souls like yours. Being rich or poor, or what you call good or bad, has nothing to do with it. Yes. It is inside people that it happens like that, and I am more often the villain than the hero inside myself."

"It seems absurd to me, and I can't think why you should take it seriously."

"It is because you are so idiotically good. You have only one side to your nature. You are like a heroine in your Dickens."

"I'm not. I'm sure I'm not. I'm bad-tempered and mean and unjust."

"You don't even know how bad I am. You have no more idea of what my life is like than a rose has of an onion's."

"I don't like onions."

"That's the trouble. You don't like the smell of onions, and so you don't eat them. Very poor people live on bread and onions and they find them good. I have no patience with you. You want to be a rose growing in a sheltered English garden."

"I don't. I don't want anything of the kind."

"A wild rose, then; and you have no right to want such a life. You are not a flower. You are a human being, and you can't have a sheltered life, or a summer hedgerow life, because you have truth and falsehood in you, and if you will not live for the truth you will die for the falsehood. That is why cinemas are good and theatres are rotten. All the plays are false, because they have forgotten truth and falsehood and are all about being rich or poor, or old or young, or married or unmarried, and in the worst plays of all they are about people pretending to be children so as to get out of the whole thing. I hate you sometimes when you seem to be trying that game of refusing to be grown up, denying your own feelings and letting men love you and pretending you don't know what it is all about."

"I never do that," she cried indignantly.

"I'm not so sure," he said, unable to resist the temptation to press home the advantage he had won in rousing her out of her placid happiness. "I'm not so sure. There are too many girls do that."

"I don't. I may have done it. But I have never done it with you. It is a wicked lie to say anything of the kind."

"You can't blame me if I catch at any idea that will help me to understand you."

"You never will, if you go grubbing about with your mind."

"Oh! my mind is no good, is it? Then take your hands off my feelings. They'll understand you right enough."

"No. They won't."

"Why not?"

"Because they're blind."

"Good God! What am I to do, then?"

"Wait."

"How long?"

"Till you can see."

"I never shall see more than I do now. If you love me, why don't you love me as I am?"

"I do. But you don't know what you are—yet, and you don't know what I am."

"I know what I want."

"It isn't what I want."

"If you knew at all what I wanted, you would want it too."

"What is it?"

"Love."

"You've got it."

"You don't call this love?"

"I do."

"Then I don't. It is just playing the fool—wasting time."

"It isn't wasting time. We are much better friends than we were."

"I don't want to be friends. I've had enough of friends. They have never done me any good. It's a silly, thin kind of happiness at best."

"It is better than no happiness at all, which the other would be."

"How can you say that?" he cried, revolted. "How can you say that? Every thought, every dream I have is centred on it. It is such happiness that my imagination is baffled by it."

"Please let us stop talking about it. We are only getting horribly at cross-purposes."

He had learned when it was wise to stop, but he needed every now and then the assurance that her serene confidence was shot with doubt. Once or twice when he had tried to thrust her back on her doubts she had flared up, and had fought tooth and nail, declaring that she would never see him again. And, as he knew she meant it, he yielded, and said that any sacrifice was better than that.

On her part, as she came more nearly to see his point of view, she was often shaken and tempted to admit that he was right. There was no looseness or formlessness about his ideas. He lived in a world that apparently made room for everything, a world in which he stood solidly on his feet while the waves of life broke upon him, and he only absorbed into himself that which his passions needed. It was a plain, simple world, where good and evil were equally true, and, apparently, largely a matter of chance—a world in which he was gloriously independent. But was he free? Sometimes she thought that he was amazingly free. His only prejudice seemed to be against pink, fleshy young men who had to do nothing for a living—young men like her brothers, for instance, of whom she had drawn an amusing series of caricatures showing the effect of introducing Mendel to them. . . . Sometimes she wondered if her own longing for freedom was not just her ignorance, just a craven desire to escape from knowing anything about life, to remain an amused but fundamentally indifferent onlooker. And when she had to face the suffering she inflicted on him, then she was often moved to cry out within herself:—

"Oh! Take me, take me! Have your will. It will make an end of it all, and you will pass on and forget me, but you will no longer suffer through me."

But she could not bend her own will, which insisted that the treasure she desired lay through him, and that he needed it even more than she. It was because of his need that he clung to her through all his suffering and exasperation. . . . Why, why was he so blind that he could not see it? Why could he, who was so sure and so strong, not see what was to her so clear through all her vacillation and all the confusion of her idealism? . . . She tried to make him read English poetry, but he could make little of it, and said none of it was worth the Bible. He declared that Shelley wrote romantical nonsense, because men could never be made perfect, and it was cruelly absurd to try it—like dressing a monkey up in human clothes. And he countered by making her read "Candide."

"When you have been through as much as Cunegonde," he said, "I'll believe in your purity."

"It isn't purity that I'm fussing about."

"What is it, then?"

"Don't let us begin it all over again."

They found common ground in Blake, whom Mendel consented to read because Blake was the only English painter who had had any idea of art at all.

Blake brought them much closer together, and their tussles were sharper, but less futile and exasperating.

"Why don't you take a lesson from Mrs. Blake?" he asked, after they had read the Life.

"What? And sit and hold your hand? You'd turn round and hit me."

"I believe I would," he laughed. "By Jove! I believe I would."

He was not easy for her to handle. It was like playing with high explosives, save that she was not playing.

She said to him once, when they had come very near the intimacy she desired:—

"I believe you would understand me if only you could let go."

"How can I let go," he roared, "when I feel that you are weighing and judging and criticising every word I say, every thing I do?"

And she was silent for a long time. It was a new and dreadful idea, that she was hemming him in by making him feel that she was judging him. It was so far from her intention that she protested:—

"I am not judging you. I accept you just as you are."

"Accept!" he grumbled. "Accept! When you keep me at arm's-length!"

"I go as far as we can, then it breaks down."

"What breaks down?"

"I don't know what to call it. Sympathy, if you like."

"Oh! then if it breaks down it isn't any good, and we may as well give it up for ever. I will learn to shuffle along without you."

"I won't shuffle. I refuse to hear of your shuffling."

"Then you want to know what to do?"

"What?"

"Take your place by my side, walk along with me like a sober, decent woman."

"But I want to fly with you, hand in hand."

She was elated, exalted. Her eyes shone and she glowed with excitement and hope. Surely he would understand now! Surely she had found words for it at last!

"That's rubbish," he said. "Men aren't birds, and they are not angels. If you want to fly, go up in an airyoplane. That's another machine like the cinema. It relieves human beings of another mania."

She turned away to hide the tears that had gushed to her eyes. Why did he waste his strength? Why did he keep his force from entering into his imagination?

That evening was most miserable for her, and she was glad when it came to an end.

To add to her difficulties he was making himself ill over his work, which, as he said, had gone completely rotten, and he did not scruple to ascribe it to her. He would spend a delightful happy evening with her and feel that his difficulties were over, that in the morning he would be able to make a beginning upon all the ideas that were so jumbled and close-packed in his head. But in the morning he would be dull and nerveless, and though he might work himself up into a frenzy, yet he could produce nothing that was any good. His work was easier, and even a little better, after the evenings when they almost quarrelled.

Again and again he told himself that he could not go on, that life was as thick and heavy as the air before a thunderstorm. Often he thought that this density, this opaqueness, with which he was surrounded, meant that he must quarrel and break with her once and for all. It would nearly kill him to do it, but if it must be done, the sooner the better. Perhaps it was wrong for him to have anything to do with the Christian world at all. No single friendship or relationship that he had had in it had been successful or of any profit to him. Little by little his peace of mind had been taken from him. Everything had been taken from him, even, now, his work. . . . That he would not have. He set his teeth and stuck to it, every day and all day, but the few pictures he turned out did not sell. Cluny would not have them, and they were rejected by the exhibitions, even by the club of which he was a member.

Of all this he said not a word to a soul, not even to Morrison, not even to Golda. His money was dwindling. That put marriage out of the question. Fate, or the ominous pressure of life, or whatever it was, played into Morrison's hands.

Every now and then, unable to endure this pressure, he plunged into excesses. There seemed to be no other way out. The Christian world refused him. He no longer belonged to his own people. Their poverty disgusted him. People had no right to be so poor as that, to have no relief from the joyless daily grind for bread. . . . It was the fault of the Christians who prayed to the Lord for their daily bread and stole it from each other because they had forgotten that it was not given them except in return for daily work.

That was the one strand of sympathy he had left with his father—Jacob's absolute refusal to receive his daily bread from any other hands than his own, and his almost crazy refusal to let Issy and Harry go out and work for other masters. They could work for their father because he had authority over them, but other masters had no authority except what they bought or stole.

But a talk with Harry decided Mendel that his people's way, the Jewish way, was no longer his.

Harry was bored. He had bouts of boredom when he could not endure the workshop and refused to go near it, however great the pressure of business might be. Like his father, he said:—

"I want nothing."

"Very well then," said Mendel; "you've got nothing. What are you grumbling at?"

"But there *is* nothing."

"Then it is easy to want nothing and you should be satisfied."

"That's it. It is too easy. Work, work, work. Play, play, play. How disgusting it all is!"

"Why didn't you stay in Paris?"

"I could not bear to be away from the people."

"But if they give you nothing?"

"They have nothing to give. Nothing but old Jews who believe and young Jews who cannot believe and are nothing."

"It is the same everywhere. The Christians do not believe either."

"But they are fools and can make themselves happy with their cinemas and their newspapers and their forward women."

"I thought you liked women, Harry."

"I don't like women who like me. . . . I don't want to marry, I don't want anything. I shall see the old people into their graves, and then I don't know what I shall do. You are the only one I know who has anything to live for or any life in him."

"I have little enough."

"Oh God! don't you start talking like me, or we shall all go to the cemetery at once."

"All right, Harry. I'll keep you going. I'll keep you astonished."

His brother's despondency helped Mendel on a little, but what a mean incentive to work, to astonish his poor ignorant family!

Very soon there came a terrible day when he had to tell them that he had not a penny in the world and that he was a failure. It would have gone hardly with him but for Harry, who espoused his cause, saying dramatically that he believed in his young brother as he believed in God, and that Mendel should not be stopped for want of money. And he went upstairs and came down with his savings, nearly thirty pounds.

"Don't be a fool!" said Jacob. "He will only spend it on drink and women."

"He is a genius," said Harry simply, and Issy, fired by his brother's example, said he had saved ten pounds and he would add that. Together they shouted Jacob down when he tried to raise his voice, until at last he produced his cash-box and gave Mendel a ten-pound note, saying:—

"If the Christians are liars when they say they believe in you, we are not. You must learn that the Christians are all liars and you must show them that you are the greatest artist in the world."

"I'll show them," mumbled Mendel. "Yes, I'll show them."

He returned to his work with a better determination to succeed, but he felt more barren than ever, and had nothing to work with but his will. Into that he gathered all his force and determined to go back and pick up the thread of his work at the point where Logan had broken into the weaving of it. He would paint yet another portrait of his mother, and then he would choose a subject from among the life of the Jews. He would start again. The Jews believed in him; he would glorify them, although he no longer believed in but only admired them. When he came to look at them clearly, they were squat and stunted, because he could only look at them from a superior height. . . . He turned over his early work, and studied it carefully, but he could not recover his childish acceptance of that existence.

For some weeks he did not go near Morrison and frequented the Paris Café, where he felt hopelessly out of it. No one spoke to him. Hardly a soul nodded to him. Night after night he sat there despondently, conjuring up the exciting evenings he had spent there. They were like ashes in his mouth.

One night, to his amazement and almost fear, some one slipped into the seat at his side. It was Oliver. She laid her hand on his knee and said:—

"You look pretty bad, Kühler. Anything wrong?"

"Much as usual. How are you? What'll you drink?"

"Kümmel's mine," she said.

He ordered two Kümmels.

"I'm all right. How are you?"

"I've told you how I am," he said testily.

"All right, all right!" she said, "I haven't been here for a long time. I wish you'd come and see me, Kühler. We never did get on, but I'd like to have a talk about old times."

"Old times!" he said. "It seems only yesterday."

"It's nearly a year since I saw you. Logan came back, you know. Mr. Tysoe was so good. He kept on the house for me. Wasn't it good of him?"

The waiter brought the Kümmel. She drank hers off at a gulp, and said:—

"It is like old times to see you, Kühler. I *am* glad."

"Go on about Logan."

"He went back to that Camden Town place, you know, and we didn't see each other for nearly two months. It was awful. I couldn't sleep at nights, and I knew he wouldn't be able to sleep. He never slept, you know, when we had had one of our hells and I wouldn't speak to him. He! he!" she gasped and giggled nervously at the memory.

"Go on," said Mendel. He was icy cold. All the strange oppression that was brooding in his life seemed to gather into a thick snowy cloud about his head and to fit it like a cap of ice. "Go on."

"Mr. Tysoe gave me money. Wasn't it good of him? He used to see Logan. Not very often—just occasionally. Logan was painting a wonderful portrait of me, in my green dress and the corals he gave me . . . See: I always wear them, even now."

She thrust her hand into her bosom and produced the string of corals.

"I lived all alone and refused to see any one. I got so thin, all my skirts had to be taken in. I knew Logan was jealous, so I didn't see any one, and when I heard about the portrait I knew he would come back. So I used to wear the green dress every evening and wait for him till twelve, one, two, three in the morning, all alone, in that little cottage on the Heath. . . . My, I *was* tired, I can tell you. But I never was one for getting up in the morning. . . . At last, one night, he came. He walked in quite quietly, as though nothing had happened.

He had brought the picture with him. My word, it *is* good. You'd love it. He had offers for it, but he wouldn't sell it. He said a funny thing about it. He said: 'It's literature. It isn't art.' So he wouldn't sell it. . . . We had a glorious time—a glorious time! It was better even than the beginning."

She stopped to linger over the memory, and she drew her hand caressingly along her thigh.

"Go on," said Mendel, to break in upon her heavy silence.

"He had plenty of money. He sold everything he did. There were one or two society ladies, the cats! Common property, I call them."

"So it broke down again," said Mendel.

"Yes. He got—— You know what he could be like. Sometimes I thought he was going off his head, and I often wonder if he wasn't a bit touched. . . . I haven't seen him since. I wondered if you had seen him."

"No. I haven't seen him. He doesn't come back to me."

"Mr. Tysoe hasn't seen him. Cluny has some of his things, but won't say a word. I think he must have left London."

"I should think so," said Mendel wearily, suddenly losing all interest. "I should think so."

"I've left Hampstead. I'm living over the Pot-au-Feu. I'm working as a model. Don't forget me, and if you hear of Logan, do let me know, and come and have a talk over old times."

She had caught sight of an acquaintance smiling at her and went over to him, for all the world, as Mendel thought, like a fly-by-night.

He half ran, half staggered out of the place, saying to himself:—

"I must see Morrison. I must see her at once."

He tried to see her next day, but Clowes told him she had gone to the country.

"I insisted on her going, she was looking so pale. You know when she feels lonely she won't eat. When she is miserable she gets so shy that she can't even go into a shop. . . . I have taken a cottage in the country, just outside London. Two rooms, two shillings a week. Isn't it cheap? So I packed her off there two days ago."

"When will she be back?"

"I don't know. When she is tired of being alone. She said she wanted to be alone."

"I want to see her. It is very important for me to see her."

"I won't have you making her ill," said Clowes.

"I must see her. Will you give me her address, so that I can write to her?"

Clowes gave him the address, and he wrote saying that life was intolerable without her.

Morrison did not need his letter, and, indeed, it only reached the cottage after she had left. She knew he needed her. Never for an instant was his image absent from her mind, and at night, when she lay awake, she could have sworn she heard a moaning cry from him. No wind ever made a sound like that.

There was a pouring rain and a howling wind, but she walked the four miles to the station and sent him a wire telling him to meet her at the station in London. He received it just in time and was on the platform.

He took her in his arms and kissed her.

"What is the matter?"

"Did you get my letter?"

"No. But I knew. What is it?"

"I don't know. My work, I think. I met Oliver last night. It upset me. But I wanted you for my work. It is like a knife stuck through my brain. I wanted to be with you, just to see you and to hear your voice. Nothing else. That part of me feels dead. . . . Oliver is living over the Pot-au-Feu, where Hetty Finch used to be. I wonder what's become of her. I expect she has found a millionaire by now. . . . We'll have the evening together. We'll dine at the Pot-au-Feu. We might meet Oliver, but I can't think of any other place."

"We'll dine with Clowes, if you like."

"No; I want to go to the Pot-au-Feu."

"Very well. Are you very tired? Your voice sounds tired."

"I'll be all right now I am with you. Mr. Sivwright asked me to go to the Merlin's Cave to-night. He has to shut it up. I thought I wouldn't go, but I want to go, if you will come with me."

"It might cheer us up, and you love dancing."

They both thought of the night when he had danced with Jessie Petrie.

"I'm painting a picture of a Jewish market. I want you to see it."

"I'm glad you've gone back. I'm sure it is right."

"What are you doing?"

It was the first time he had asked after her work and a glow of happiness overcame her.

"Oh! I . . . I'm doing a landscape—just a road running up a hill with some houses on top."

"Like Rousseau. He was good at roads."

"Mine's just painting. It isn't abstract."

"You can't paint without being abstract," he said irritably. "Even Academicians can't really imitate, but they abstract without using their brains. You can't really copy nature, so what's the good of trying?"

"You can suggest."

"Then it's a sketch and not a picture."

"Perhaps mine is only a sketch," she said rather forlornly, because she had been rather hopeful of her work.

They went back to his studio, where he showed her his studies and drawings for the new picture. She saw that he was working again with his old love of his craft.

They dined at the Pot-au-Feu, and had it all to themselves because the weather was so bad. There were only the goggle-eyed man in the corner with his green evening paper and Madame Feydeau and Gustave, the waiter.

Over the dinner Mendel waxed very gay and gave her a very comic description of the scene when he had gone to his family to confess his failure. He had a wonderful power of making them comic without laughing at them.

"They are wonderful people," he said. "They know what is sense and what is nonsense. If you gave them the biggest problem in the world they would know what was true in it and what was false. They are always right about politics and public men. But when it comes to art, they are hopeless."

"But they believe in you."

"Because I belong to them. They believe in themselves. . . . My mother was quite sound about Logan. She said it could not go on. I thought it was for ever. I've been thinking about Logan. He could never be himself. He was always wanting to be something—something big. I thought he was big for a long time. But he's just a man. I don't think Cézanne was ever anything but just a man. It makes one thing, doesn't it? All these people who are written about as though they were something terrific, all trying to be something more than they are—just men. And then a quiet little man comes along and he is bigger than the lot of them, because he has never tried to blow himself out, but has given himself room to grow."

She had never known him so gentle and tender and wise, and if he had wanted to love her she would not have denied him. She trusted him so completely. And he looked so ill and tired. But he only wanted to be with her, and to talk to her and to hear her voice.

After dinner they went to a cinema to fill in time, and he shouted with laughter like a boy, threw himself about, and stamped his feet at the comic film. And she laughed too, and took his hand in hers and held it in her lap.

"That was good!" he said. "I think I should like to be a cinema actor. If I get really hard up I shall try it. I might be a star, if I could learn to wear my clothes properly and could get my hair to lie down in a solid shiny block."

"I'll go with you. I'm sure I could roll my eyes properly."

"Come along," he said.

It was still raining hard, so they took a taxi to the Merlin's Cave, though it was not half a mile away.

Everything was the same, even to the two rich young men who entered just after them. They signed the book, and then, hearing the music, Mendel seized Morrison by the wrist and dragged her down the stairs.

The place was astonishingly full. Nearly all the tables were occupied, and they had to take one between the orchestra and the door. Calthrop, Mitchell, Weldon, Jessie Petrie, everybody from the Paris Café was there.

Oliver was sitting with Thompson and the critic. In a far corner Clowes was sitting with the young man from the Detmold. There were models, male and female, all the strange people who for one reason or another had lived in or on the Calthrop tradition. In the middle of the room were two large tables which Sivwright had packed with celebrities—authors, journalists, editors, actors, and music-hall comedians. They were being fed royally, as became lions, and there were champagne bottles gleaming on the tables. Tall young soldiers in mufti began to arrive with chorus-girls who had not troubled to remove their make-up.

"It's a gala!" said Mendel.

Oliver saw him, and beamed and raised her glass. He rose and bowed with mock solemnity.

Dancing had not begun. Apparently the lions were to sing for their supper.

An author read a short play, which he explained had been suppressed by the censor. To Mendel it sounded very mild and foolish. It was a tragedy, but no one was moved; the audience much preferred the music-hall comedian, who followed with a song about a series of mishaps to his trousers.

The same reedy-voiced poet recited the same poem as before, and the same foolish girl sang the same foolish song, and it looked as though the programme would never end.

Mendel was irritated and bored, and called for champagne.

"Waiter!"

But the waiter did not hear him.

"You don't want any champagne," said Morrison.

"Waiter!"

The door by them opened and Logan slipped in. He was almost a shadow of his old self. The plump flesh had gone from his face, which was all eyes and bones. He looked famished. His eyes swept round the room, and, fastening on Oliver, lit up with a gleam of satisfaction. He was like a starving man looking at a nice pink ham in a shop window. He moved swiftly towards her, but stopped on seeing the men she was with and swerved to a table a few yards behind her. From where Mendel was sitting it looked as though he were peering over her shoulder, an evil, menacing face.

Mendel shivered, and his eyes suddenly felt dry and hot, as though they were being pushed out of his face. His throat went dry, and when he tried to call the waiter he could make no sound. The waiter met his eyes and came.

"Champagne!" said Mendel.

"Very good, sir. One bottle?"

"Half-a-bottle," said Morrison.

"One bottle," roared Mendel.

A young artist, who knew them both slightly, hearing the order, came and sat with them.

The dancing began.

"Come and dance," said Morrison.

"No, I don't want to dance. That was Logan who came in. He hasn't seen me yet."

"Which is Logan?" asked the young artist. "He's done some good things. Some one told me the other day he had softening of the brain."

"Rubbish!" said Mendel. "They say that of every man who makes a success, as though it needed something strange to account for it. It's either softening of the brain, or consumption, or three wives, or he is killing himself with drink. They talk as though art itself were some kind of disease."

Logan had seen Mendel, and their eyes met. Mendel felt that Logan was looking clean through him, looking at him as a ghost might look at a man whom he had known in life, fondly, tenderly, icily through him, without expecting him to be aware of the terrible scrutiny. But Mendel was aware of it, and it chilled him to the marrow. Logan gave no sign, but stared and stared, and presently turned his eyes away without a sign, without a tremor. It was like turning away the light of a lantern. He turned his eyes from Mendel to Oliver in one sweep. No one else but those two seemed to exist for him, and Mendel felt that he no longer existed. And more than ever Logan looked as if he were peering over Oliver's shoulder with those staring, piercing eyes of his from which the soul had gone out. Only the glowing spark of a fixed will was left in them to keep them sane and human.

Mendel began to drink. The orchestra behind him sent the rhythm of a waltz thumping through him. But it went heavily, without music or tune. One—two—three. It was like having molten lead poured on the nape of his neck, threatening to jerk his head off his spine. From where he sat he could not see the dancing-floor, except reflected in a mirror opposite him. . . . Oh! it was a gay sight and a silly! It had nothing to do with him. He could see nothing but Oliver with the grim, haggard face looking over her shoulder. He gulped down a glass of wine. That was better. It made things bearable. He poured out another glass of wine.

"I think there is more in the Futurists than the Cubists," said the young artist.

"In art," said Mendel, turning on him savagely, "there is neither past nor present nor future; there is only eternity. You try to make a group out of that, and see how you will get on. You can put that at the head of your manifesto and your group would melt away under it like the fat on a basted pigeon."

He put out his hand for his glass, but Morrison had taken it and was drinking.

"You'll make yourself drunk," he said, taking it from her gently.

"I finished it all," she said, with an unhappy smile. "I didn't want you to drink it, and you looked so tragic I knew it would be bad for you."

The young artist crept away. Mendel took Morrison's hand and gripped it.

"I'm glad you are with me," he said. "Look at Logan!"

Never taking his eyes off Oliver, Logan had begun to move towards her with his hand in his breast pocket. He had nearly reached her with his eyes glowing almost yellow under the electric light, when he changed his mind, swung round, and went to another table and sat with his head down, biting his nails.

The dancing was fast and furious, and this time it was the flute which played an obbligato, thin, fantastic, and comic, real silvery fun, like a trickle of water down a crag into a pool in sunshine.

Thompson went to the dancing-floor with a girl in fancy dress—a columbine's costume. That seemed to relieve Logan, who jumped to his feet, walked quickly round to Oliver, bent over her, and spoke to her. Her face wore an expression of amazed delight. Her eyes were drawn to his, and though she shrank under them, she seemed to go soft and flabby: she could not resist them. There was no menace in Logan now, only an attitude of fixed mastery, an air of taking possession of her once and for all, of knowing that at last he would get the longed-for satisfaction.

They spoke together for a little longer, then she rose and put her hand up and caressed his cheek and neck as though it hurt her to see them so thin—as though, indeed, she refused to believe what her eyes told her.

They walked past Mendel and Morrison without seeing them. Mendel gripped Morrison's hand until she felt that the blood must gush out of her nails. Logan opened the swing-door for Oliver, devouring her with his burning eyes, in which there was a desperate set purpose of which he seemed to be almost weary. So frail he looked, as if but a little more and he would loose his hold even on that to which he clung. And Oliver smiled at him with a malicious promise in her eyes that he should have his will, that his hold should be loosened and his weariness come to an end. Clearly she knew that he had no thought outside herself.

And outside the two of them Mendel had no thought. His mind became as a tunnel down which they were moving, and soon they were lost to his sight and he was left to wait. There his thoughts stopped, while he waited.

CHAPTER IX

LOGAN MAKES AN END

ALL night long he paced up and down his studio. His thoughts would not move, but went over and over the scene in the Cave, and probed vainly in the darkness for the next move. When he heard footsteps in the street he hung out of the window, making sure that it must be Logan come for him. But no one stopped at the door, and soon within himself and without was complete silence, save for his footsteps on the floor and the matches he struck to light cigarette after cigarette, though he could not keep one of them alight.

His imagination rejected the facts and refused to work on them. The scene in the Cave had left an impression upon his retina, like that of the cinema—just a plain flat impression containing no material for his imagination. And yet he knew that he was deeply engaged in whatever was happening.

With his chin in his hands he leaned out of his window and watched the dawn paint the eastern sky and the day wipe out the colours. Doors were opened in the street. Windows were lit with the glow of the fires, and the day's activity had begun, but he had no share in it, for he knew that this day was like no other. For him it was a day lost in impenetrable shadow, and he could not tell what should take him out of it. And still he expected Logan would come.

He heard Rosa get up and go downstairs and light the fire and bawl up to Issy to jump out of his bed, filthy snoring sluggard that he was. He heard the voices of the children and the baby yelling. . . . How indecent, how abominable it was to cram so many people into one small house!

At the usual time he went over to his mother's kitchen for breakfast, and gulped down his tea, but made no attempt to eat. Golda looked at him reproachfully, but said nothing, for she saw that he was in some deep trouble.

After breakfast, as usual, he went for his walk down through Whitechapel almost as far as Bow Church and back.

In his studio when he returned he found a policeman, who said:—

"Mr. Mendel Kühler?"

"Yes."

The policeman handed him a letter from Logan who had scrawled:—

"I believe in you to the end."

To the end?

"Is he dead?" asked Mendel.

"Next door to it," said the policeman. "The woman's done in."

"Where?"

"At the Pot-au-Feu, Soho."

"Where is he now?"

"Workhouse infirmary. If you want to see him the police will raise no objection."

"Thank you," said Mendel.

He asked the direction and set out at once.

The workhouse was a dull grey mass of buildings, rising out of a dull grey district like an inevitable creation of its dullness, and it seemed an inevitable contrast to the Merlin's Cave, so that it was right that Logan should walk out of the glitter into it. This was the very contrast that Mendel's imagination had been vainly seeking, and now, with the violence of a sudden release, his thoughts began to work again. . . . Oliver was dead. That was inevitable too. But why?

Logan had surrendered to her. They would go home from the Merlin's Cave to the Pot-au-Feu, to Hetty Finch's room. He would surrender to her absolutely, because she had willed his destruction and could not see that his destruction meant her own. She wanted recognition, acknowledgment that her vitality was more important than anything else in the world, and she had brought Logan to it. There had been a cold, set purpose in his eyes last night—an intellectual purpose. The equation was worked out. She could have what she wanted, at a price. She could destroy the will and the desire of a man, but not his mind, not his spirit, which would still be obedient to a higher will, and that would break her as she had broken.

Very bare and grim was the waiting-room in which Mendel had to bide until the nurse came for him. Its walls were of a faded green, dim and grimy, and when the door was opened as people went in or out, there was wafted in a smell of antiseptics. But as his thoughts gathered force the room seemed to be filled with a great light, which revealed beauty in the poor people waiting patiently to see their sick. They became detached and pictorial, but he could not think of them in terms of paint. His mind had begun to work in a new way, and he felt more solid, more human, more firmly planted on the ground, as though at last he was admitted to a place in life. It mattered to him no more that he was a Jew and strange and foreign to the Christian world. There were neither Jews nor Christians now. There were only people—tragic, wonderful people. . . . He even forgot that he was in love. All his mind was concentrated upon Logan, who was now also tragic and wonderful, a source of tragedy and wonder, and his whole effort was to discover and to make plain to himself his share in the tragedy: not to weigh and measure and to wonder whether at one point or another he could have stopped it. Nothing could have stopped it.

There was no room for judgment in this tragic world.

A nurse came to fetch him.

She said:—

"He is very weak, but he will be strong enough to know you. Don't excite him."

She led him into the bare, white ward, across which the sun threw great shafts of light, to Logan's bedside. At the head of the bed a policeman was sitting with his helmet on his knees, staring straight in front of him. He turned his eyes on Mendel, who thought he looked a very nice man, something amusingly imperturbable in this racking world of tragedy.

He stood by the bedside and looked down at Logan, in whose face there was at last the noble, conquering expression at which, through all his foolish striving, he had always aimed. His brow was strong and massive, his mouth relentless as Beethoven's, his nose sharp and stubborn, and there was something exquisite and sensitive in the drawn skin about his eyes. From his white brow his shock of black hair fell back on the pillow.

His hand was outside the grey coverlet. Mendel took it in his. Logan opened his eyes, and into them came an expression of almost incredulous surprise, of ecstatic, intolerable happiness. He had wakened out of his dream into his dream, to be with Mendel, to have gone through the very depths to be with Mendel. His hand closed tight on his friend's and his lids drooped over his eyes.

He opened them again after a few moments and said:—

"You!"

The nurse placed a chair for Mendel, and he sat down and said:—

"How are you feeling?"

"Pretty weak. I dreamed of your coming, but I didn't really believe it. . . . I've done it, you know."

"Yes."

"What are you doing?"

"I've painted another portrait of my mother. A good one, this time. She is sitting in a wooden chair as she always sits, with her hands folded on her stomach. And I am planning a picture of a Jewish market, something bigger than I have attempted yet."

"I see. Good—good. . . . We must work together. We can do it now."

"Yes," said Mendel, rather mystified. It was very strange to have Logan talking like that, as though he were going back to the first days of their friendship.

"It is such peace," said Logan; and indeed he looked as if he were at peace, lying there so still and white, with the hard strain gone from his eyes, in which there was none of the old roguish twinkle, but an expression of pain through which there shone a penetrating and most tender light.

"Peace," murmured Logan again. "Tell me more. There is only art."

"There is nothing else," answered Mendel, carried away on the impulse of Logan's spirit and understanding what he meant when he said "we." Life, the turbulent life of every day, the life of desire, was broken and had fallen away from him, so that he was living without desire, only in his enduring will, which had lost patience with his desires and had destroyed them.

Through Mendel trembled a new and strange elation. He recognised that his friendship with Logan was just beginning, and that he was absolved from all share in the catastrophe, if such there had been. And from him too the turbulent life of desire fell away, and he could be at one with his friend. There was no need to talk of the past—it was as though it had never been.

He described the design he had made for his picture: two fat old women bargaining, and a strong man carrying a basket of fruit on his head.

"A good beginning," said Logan. "I . . . I could never get going. I was always overseen in my work."

"Overseen!" said Mendel, puzzled by the word.

"Yes. I was always outside the picture, working at it. . . . Too . . . too much brains, too little force."

"I see," said Mendel, for whom a cold finger had been put on one of his own outstanding offences against art. For a moment it brought him to an ashamed silence, but Logan's words slipped so easily into his understanding and took up their habitation there, that he was powerless to resent or to attempt to dislodge them.

"Overseen," Logan repeated, with an obvious pleasure in plucking out the weeds from their friendship, in the fair promise of which he found peace and joy. "That was the trouble. It couldn't go on. . . . City life, I think. Too much for us. Things too much our own way. . . . Egoism. . . ."

"I know that I am feeling my way towards something and that it is no good forcing it," said Mendel.

An acute attack of pain seized Logan, and he closed his eyes and was silent for a long time, with his brows knit in a kind of impatient boredom at having to submit to such a thing as pain.

"They've been very good to me," he said. "Given me everything as if I were really ill."

He sank back into pain again.

Mendel looked across at the policeman with a feeling of irritation that he should be there, a typical figure of the absurd chaotic life which had fallen away, a symbol of the factitious pretence of order which could only deceive a child.

"Can't you leave me alone with him?" he whispered.

The policeman shook his head.

"No, sir."

"You mustn't worry about outside things," said Logan, with an effort. "We *are* alone. . . . Have you found a new friend?"

"No."

"You will. Better men than I have been. . . . Do you see that girl still?"

"Yes."

"She was the strongest of us."

"How?"

Logan made no answer, and gave a slight shake of impatience at Mendel's not understanding him.

"Something," he said, "that I never got anywhere near. . . . I . . . I was overseen in that too."

The blood drummed in Mendel's temples. Logan's cold finger went probing into his life too, and showed him always casting his own shadow over his passions. In love it was the same as in art. . . . It was very odd that, with every nerve at stretch to understand Logan and how he had been brought to smash the clotted passion of his life, it should only be important to understand himself, and that he should be able to understand so coldly, so clearly, so easily.

And now the presence of the policeman became a relief. It was a guarantee that the whole visible world would not be swept away by the frozen will in Logan, which was like a floe of ice bearing everything with it, nipping at Mendel's life, squeezing it up high and dry and bearing it along. He felt that if the policeman were to go away he would be drawn down into the doom that was upon Logan, into the valley of the shadow, even while the good sun came streaming in through the tall windows. . . . He had lost all the emotional interest which had kept him awake through the night. . . . It had been simple enough. There had been himself, Logan and Oliver, three people, living in London the gay, reckless life of artists in London, a city so huge that men and women could do in it as they pleased. Oliver and he had hated each other, and Logan had had to choose between them. He had chosen wrongly and had put an end to his misery in the only possible way.

Mendel fought back out of the shadow—back to the policeman, and the sick men lying in the rows of beds, and the dead man lying in the bed which had just been surrounded by a screen, and the simple, wonderful people in the waiting-room downstairs, and the sun streaming through the windows, and the teeming life outside in London—wonderful, splendid London, the very heart of the world. . . . It was well for Logan to lose sight of these things. He was a dying man. But Mendel was alive, never more alive than now, in face of the shadow of death, and he would not think the thoughts of a dying man unless they could be shaped in the likeness of life. He gathered together all his forces, summoned up everything that urged him towards life and towards art, and of his own strong living will plunged after Logan, no longer in obedience to Logan's frozen purpose, but as a friend giving to his friend the meed that was due to him.

He took Logan's hand and pressed it, and chafed it gently to make it warm, and Logan smiled at him, and an expression of anguish came into his face as the warmth of his friend wrapped him round, penetrated him, thawed and melted his purpose, with which he had lived for so many empty, solitary days until it had driven him to make an end. The coldness in his friend touched Mendel's heart and was like a stab through it, and he felt soon a marvellous release, as if his blood were flowing again, and it seemed that the weaknesses on which Logan had laid his finger were borne down with him into the shadow.

Mendel remembered Cézanne's portrait of his wife, and how he had intended to tell Logan that it had made him feel like a tree with the sap running through it to the budding leaves in spring.

He told him now, and added:—

"It doesn't matter that I did not understand you in life."

"No," said Logan. "Don't go away!"

"I'll stay," replied Mendel; "I'll stay."

Then he was in a horrible agony again, as the marvellous clarity he had just won disappeared. Logan knew what he was doing, that he was taking with him all the weaknesses and vain follies which had so nearly brought them both to baseness, and Mendel knew that Logan must continue as a powerful force in his work; but he crushed the rising revolt in himself, the last despairing effort of his weakness, and gave himself up to feeding the extraordinary delight it was to the poor wretch, lying there with his force ebbing away, to give himself up to a pure artistic purpose such as had been denied him in his tangled life. Through this artistic purpose Logan could rise above the natural ebbing process of his vitality, which sucked away with it the baseness and the folly he had brought into his friend's life. He could rejoice in the contact of their minds, the mingling of their souls, the proud salute of this meeting and farewell. It was nothing to him that he was dying, little enough that he had lived, for he knew that he had never lived until now.

The nurse came and said the patient must rest.

"Don't go away!" pleaded Logan.

"I'll wait," said Mendel, patting his hand to reassure him.

"Half-past two," said the nurse as she followed Mendel out. "What a remarkable man!" she added. "What a tragedy! I suppose the girl was to blame too."

"Blame?" said Mendel, rather dazed at being brought back to customary values. "Blame?"

He went down to the dingy waiting-room and sat there subdued, cowering, exhausted. He felt very cold and miserable. It was so terrible waiting for a thing that had happened. The physical fact could make no difference. . . . Logan had made an end, a very complete and thorough end. . . . Oh! the relief of it, the relief of having Logan for his friend at last, of having seen him freely and fully tasting at last his heart's desire, of being himself brought up to that level, that pure contact with another human being, for which he had always longed. . . . That desire in both of them had been violated and despoiled, God knows how. Lies? Lust? Profanation of the holy spirit of art? . . . . What words could describe the evil that everywhere in life lay in wait for the adventurous, letting the foolish and the timid, the faint of heart and the blind of soul, go by, and waiting for strong men who walked with purpose and a single mind?

At half-past two the nurse came to fetch him.

"He is very weak now," she said.

Logan's face wore a noble gathering serenity. He was too weak to talk much, and only wanted Mendel to hold his hand and to talk to him about art, about pictures "they" were going to paint, and about pictures they had both loved: Cranach, Dürer, Uccello, Giotto, Blake, Cézanne.

"Good men, those," said Logan. "Good company."

"Good, decent, quiet little men."

"We shall do good things."

His hand closed more tightly on Mendel's, who surrendered himself to the force of the ebb in his friend, felt the cold, salt waves of death close about him and drag him out, out until Logan was lost, and with a frightful wrench all that was dead in himself was torn away, and he was left prostrate upon the fringes of his life. . . . He became conscious to find himself leaning over Logan, gazing at his lips, with his own lips near them, waiting for the breath that would come no more.

It was finished. Logan had made an end.

Turning away, Mendel saw through the window the lovely grey-blue sky, fleecy with mauve-grey clouds heaped up by the driving wind—beautiful, beautiful. . . .

CHAPTER X

PASSOVER

IT was many days before Mendel could take up his work again. His mind simply could not express itself in paint.

His first clear thought as he emerged from the numbness of the crisis was for Morrison, and to her he wrote, telling her what had happened, describing in minute detail his experience in the hospital, and adding that he was without the least wish to see her, and would write to her if his life ever became again what it had been before Logan's violent end.

It seemed to him that Logan had claimed him, that he was destined to go through life with Logan, a dead man, for sole companion, and always behind Logan was the ominous and dreadful shadow of Oliver, from whom he had thought to escape those many months ago.

His isolation was complete. It seemed that he had not a friend in the world, and there was not a soul towards whom he could move or wished to move. He could only rake over the ashes of the dead past and marvel that there had ever been a flame stirring in them. And as he raked them, he thrust into them much that only a short while ago had been living and delightful.

What had happened? Youth could not be gone while he was yet so young, but he felt immeasurably old, and, in his worst condition, outside Time, which took shape as a stream flowing past him, bearing with it all his dreams, loves, aspirations, hopes, thoughts. When he tried to cast himself into it, to rescue these treasured possessions, he was clutched back, thrown down, and left prostrate with his eyes darkened and the smell of death in his nostrils.

Sometimes he thought with terror that he had plunged too far, had given too much to Logan, had committed some obscure blasphemy, had been perhaps "overseen" even in that moment when the weakness and all that was dead in him had been wrenched away. And he said to himself:—

"No. This is much worse than death. It is foolish to seek any meaning in death, for death is not the worst."

It was no good turning to his people, for he knew that he was cut off from them. They were confined in their Judaism, from which he had broken free. That was one of the dead things which had been taken from him.

His mother could not help him, because she could not endure his unhappiness. The pain of it was too great for her, and he had to invent a spurious happiness, to pretend that he was working as usual, though with great difficulty, and that, as usual, he was out and about, seeing his friends. And in a way this pretence gave him relief, though he suffered for it afterwards. He suffered so cruelly that he was forced by it into making an effort to grope back into life.

He was able to take up his work again, and the exercise of his craft soothed him, though it gave him no escape. The conception of his market picture was dead. It was enclosed in Judaism, from which he was free. Yet he had no other conception in his mind, and he knew that any picture he might paint must spring from it. So he clung to the dead conception and made studies and drawings for its execution.

Some of these drawings he was able to sell to Tysoe, who worried him by coming to talk about Logan and was nearly always ashamed to leave the studio without buying. Mendel was saved from borrowing of his people, which had become repugnant to him now that he no longer belonged to them.

It was through Tysoe's talk that he was able to push his way through the tragedy of Logan and Oliver back to life. Tysoe insisted that the cause of it was jealousy, but Mendel knew that Logan was beyond jealousy, and, piecing the story together, he saw how Oliver had set herself to smash their friendship because it fortified in her lover what she detested, his intellect, which, because she could not satisfy it, stood between him and his passion for her. If any one was responsible it was she, for she had tried to smash a spiritual thing and had herself been smashed. . . . And Mendel saw that had he tried to smash the relationship between Logan and Oliver he too would have been broken, for that also was a spiritual thing, though an evil. And he saw that, but for Morrison, he must have tried to smash it. His obligation to her had given him the strength to resist, to make his escape. Oliver had triumphed, evil had triumphed, and she and Logan were dead and he had to grope his way back to life, and if he could not succeed in doing that, then she and evil would have triumphed indeed, and what was left of him would have to follow the dead that had gone with Logan.

He sought the society of his father and of the old Jews, the friends of the family, and was left marvelling at their indifference to good and evil. They knew neither joy nor despair. They had yielded up their will to God, upon Whom, through fair weather and foul, their thoughts were centred. They lived in a complete stagnation which made him shudder. Their lives were like stale water, like unmoved puddles, from which every now and then their passions broke in bubbles, broke vainly, in bubbles. Nothing brought them any nearer to the God upon Whom their thoughts were centred, and only Time brought them any nearer to the earth.

✓ And yet Mendel loved them in their simple dignity. They had a quality which he had found nowhere in the Christian world, where men and women had their thoughts centred on the good, leaving evil to triumph as it had triumphed in Oliver. . . . She had wanted good. With all the power of her insensate passion, her blind sensuality, she had wanted love, the highest good she could conceive. . . . But these old Jews were wiser: they wanted God, Whom they knew not how to attain. Yet God was ever present to them.

In Mendel, too, this desire for God became active and kindled his creative will. He plunged into his work with a frenzy, but soon recognized that he was committing the old offence and was "overseen." . . . Yet how shall a man approach his God if not through art?

"Something is lacking!" cried Mendel desperately. "Something is lacking!"

His imagination flew back to that last sublime moment of friendship with Logan, but it lacked warmth. It seemed that he could not take it back into life with him, or that until he had established contact with life its force could not be kindled. . . . Oh! for sweet, comfortable things—flowers, and rare music, a white, gleaming tablecloth, and good meats!

He thought, with envy, of Edward Tufnell and his wife going along the road on either side smiling at each other, so happily smiling. And then he thought with more satisfaction of the old Jews. They were the wiser and the more solid. They walked in the middle of the way, and good and evil went on either side and neither could attain them. . . . His thoughts swung between those two extremes like a pendulum, and out of the momentum thus created grew a force in his mind which began to find its way towards the God he was seeking. But it was only in his mind. His force, his passion, were left slumbering in the hypnotic sleep imposed on them by the tragedy.

Yet the mental impulse kept him working in a serene ecstasy. He could make the design for his picture, and simplify his figures into a form in which he knew there was some beauty, or at least that it could hold beauty and let no drop of it escape.

He could return then to his normal life, and made Golda very happy by joking with her and spending many evenings in her kitchen.

“You should take a holiday,” she said. “You look tired out.”

“I will,” he said, “when the spring comes. I am going to be an artist, but I am afraid it will not mean carriages and horses and the King commanding his portrait to be painted.”

He had the very great joy of beginning to understand Cézanne’s delight in the intellectual craft of painting and to see why he had neglected the easier delights of handicraft and the mere pleasure of the eye. But the more he understood, the harder it became to finish his picture. He slaved at it, but there was still no beauty in it.

He would not surrender. It would have been so easy to slip back to fake a pictorial quality. He had only to go to the National Gallery to come out with his head buzzing with ideas and impressions. He had only to go into the street to have a thousand mental notes from which to give his work a human and dramatic quality.

He stuck to it and slaved away until he was forced to give in.

"You devil!" he said, as he shook his fist at the picture. "You empty jug!"

But there was some satisfaction in it, unfinished failure as it was, and he wanted Morrison to see it.

He wrote and asked her to come.

She and Clowes were in the country, painting, and they wired to him to come and stay with them for a week. Clowes wrote to tell him that she could put him up in the farm of which her cottage was a part.

With her letter he went racing over to see his mother.

"I'm going away," he said. "I'm going away to the country. The Christian girl has a house in the country and I am going to stay in it."

"You will have fresh air and new milk to make you well again," cried Golda, scarcely able to contain her joy at seeing him once more his happy, elated, robustious self. "You will be well again, but you should have done with that nonsense about the Christian girl. A sparrow does not mate with a robin, and a cock robin is what you are."

"Yes. I'm a robin," said Mendel, and he whistled blithely, "Tit-a-weet! tit-a-weet! tit-a-weet! I shall go on the halls as a whistler. Tit-a-weet! and I shall make three hundred pounds a week. Tit-a-weet! tit-a-weet!"

Golda laughed at him till the tears ran, so happy was she to have him come back to her.

"It is not nonsense about the Christian girl," he said.

"She is going to turn me into a Public School gentleman, and I shall bring her to see you, so that you can know for yourself that it is not nonsense."

"It is not the girl who is nonsensical, but you."

"Tit-a-weet!"

"I will bake her a Jewish bread and you shall take it to her. Yes. Bring her to me and I will thank her for bearing with you."

"Tit-a-weet! Tit-a-weet!"

"Cock robin!"

His luggage consisted of a brown-paper parcel, a paint-box and two canvases.

Morrison met him at the station. She was glowing with health and good spirits and began to tease him at once about his luggage, of which she insisted on taking charge.

"It's the loveliest little cottage!" she said; "only two rooms. . . . I hope you don't mind walking along the road. There is another way through the fields, but I daren't try to find it; besides, it goes through the woods, and I don't want you to see any woods before you have been to mine. I don't believe there'll be room for you in the cottage. You'll have to sit in the garden and have your meals handed out to you, among the chickens and the pigs."

"Pigs?" said Mendel, "I want to draw pigs. Marvellous animals!"

"These are the most marvellous pigs that ever were."

So they chattered in a growing glee as they walked along the winding road up into the hills. They were unwilling to let their deep thoughts emerge until they had been caught up in the beauty of the place, the serene lines of the comfortable folding hills, the farmsteads tucked in the hollows, the rich velvet plough-lands, the blue masses of woods, the gorse-grown common, and the single sentinels the trees, and the hedges where the birds sang and twittered, Tit-a-weet! tit-a-weet! . . . And over the hills hung the wide sky, vast and open, with great clouds that seemed to be drawn from the edge of the earth and sent floating up and up to show how limitless was the space above the earth.

For the first time Mendel had no sting of anger at the exhilaration in the English girl, no desire to pluck her out from the surroundings of the lovely English country in which it seemed to be her desire to lose herself. She was one with the rich fields and the mighty trees and the singing birds in the hedges, and when his heart sang Tit-a-weet, he knew it for a comic Cockney note. It was he who was at fault, not she, and she was the very comfort he had come to seek.

The farmer's wife received him with a kindly pity—the poor, pale London foreigner—and told him he must have plenty of good plain country food, plenty of milk, plenty of fresh air.

"I do the cooking for Miss Clowes," she said, "and if you'll excuse my saying so, the young ladies take a deal of tempting."

Mendel thought her a wonderful woman, his room a wonderful room, the cottage a wonderful cottage, and the place the finest in the world. The air was rare and buoyant and he had never felt so free and so strong. His life in London looked to him like a bubble which he could break with a touch or with a puff of his breath. But he was reluctant to break it yet, for the time had not come.

The girls showed him their work and he praised it, and began to talk of his own picture. Clowes led him on to explain what she called the modern movement, which she could not pretend to understand.

Conversation that first evening was all between Clowes and Mendel, while Morrison sat silent, curled up on the floor by the fire, gazing into it, sometimes listening, sometimes dreaming, sometimes shaking with a happy dread as she thought how near she was to her heart's desire. It had been for so long her central thought that she would take him down to the country and get him away from the terrible pressure of London upon his spirit, so that she could see released in him, perhaps slowly, perhaps painfully, what she loved—the vivid, clear vitality. And now she had won. She had him sitting there within reach, with good, faithful Clowes, and already she could feel the new glow of health in him. Almost she could detect a new tone in his lovely rich voice. . . . Sometimes, as she gazed into the fire, her eyes were clouded with tears. It seemed so incredible that she could have won against the innumerable enemies, invisible and intangible, against whom action had been impossible, even if she had known what to do.

She had been happy enough with Clowes in this place, but now she could not help a wickedly ungrateful desire that Clowes should be spirited away.

Clowes absented herself in the day-time, but Mendel had very little energy, and for the most part of the day sat by the fire brooding over the bubble of his London life, which he knew he must break with a touch. Often Morrison sat with him, and neither spoke a word for hours together.

On the fifth day, when the sun shone so that it was wicked to be indoors, Morrison suggested lunch in the woods. Clowes excused herself, but Mendel agreed to go with her, and the farmer's wife packed them a basket of food. They set out gaily, over the common, up the rolling field green with winter corn, down through the jolly farmyard full of gobbling turkeys and strutting guinea-fowl, under the wild cherry-trees to the woods, where in a clearing they made a fire, and Morrison, declaring that she was a gipsy, sang the only song she could remember, "God Save the King," and told his fortune by his hand. He was to meet a dark woman who would make a great change in his life, and money would come his way, but he must beware of the Knave of Clubs.

Entering into her mood, he insisted that they must act a Wild West cinema drama, and he rescued her from Indians and a Dago ravisher, and in the end claimed her hand from a grateful father; and so hilarious did they become that the cinema drama turned into an opera, and he was Caruso to her Melba. In the end they laughed until they were exhausted, and decided that it was time for lunch.

After they had eaten they were silent for a long time, and at last, rather to her surprise, she found herself beginning to explain to him that this was love, this the heaven at which she had been aiming, the full song whereof they had played the first few notes as boy and girl at the picnic and again in the dewy grass on the Heath. And she told him quite simply that she had loved him always, from the time when they had met on the stairs at the Detmold, and even before that, though she could not remember clearly. And she told him that love dwelt in the woods and the hedgerows, in the sweet air and the song of the birds, not only in the springtime but in the harsh winter weather and in the summer heat of the sun. . . .

"Oh, Mendel," she said, "I have been wanting you to know, but it seemed that you would never know while you looked for love in the heat and the dust of London."

And he as simply believed her. It was lovely there in the woods, among the tall grey-green pillars of the trees, with the pale yellow sunlight falling on the emerald of the moss and the russet of the dead bracken, and the brilliant enamel of the blackberry leaves. He was overcome with his exquisite delight, and she, to comfort him, held him in her arms, her weary shaggy faun, so bitterly conscious of his own ugliness. She soothed him and caressed him, and won him over to her own serene joy, which passed from her to him in wave upon wave of flooding warmth, melting the last coldness in his soul, healing the last wounds upon his spirit.

He roused himself, flung up his head, and began to whistle:—

"Tit-a-weet!"

And he looked so comical that she laughed.

"That isn't anything like a bird," she said.

"It is. It is very like cock robin."

To their mutual amazement it seemed entirely unnecessary to discuss the future or the past, and the present demanded only happy silence. Here in the enchantment of the woods was love, and it was enough.

While they stayed in the woods they hardly talked at all, but as they walked home he became solemn and said, as though it pained and puzzled him:—

"We are no longer young."

"We shall never be anything else," she protested, for she was pained by the change in his mood.

"Youth passes," he said.

And her exhilaration died in her, for she knew she had touched his obstinacy. He saw her droop and was sorry, and began to whistle and to laugh, but she could not be revived. She had thought to have secured him, to have made him safe with the charm of love for ever, but she was sure now that the hardest of all was yet to come.

In the evening, as they sat by the fire in the little white room, Mendel and Clowes talking and Morrison curled up on the floor gazing into the coals, he suddenly ceased to hear Clowes' voice, and saw very clearly the bubble of his life in London before him—Mr. Kuit, Issy, Hetty Finch, Mitchell, Logan and Oliver—Logan and Oliver leaving the Merlin's Cave and going out into the street and walking home to the Pot-au-Feu, up the narrow, dark stairs to Hetty Finch's room. . . . He put out his hand to touch the bubble and it broke, and with a shuddering, gasping cry he heard Clowes saying:—

"On the whole I don't think all this modern stuff can be good for anything but decoration."

And he began to think of his own picture, which was full of life. Wherever he picked up the design he could follow it all round the picture, and through and through it, beyond it into the mystery of art, and out of it back into life. It was poised, a wonderful, lovely created thing, with a complete, unaccountable, serene life of its own. The harsh, gloomy background of London fell away, and in its place shone green hills and a clear blue sky, fleecy with mauve-grey clouds. . . .

Following the clouds, he came easily back to life again, to the two girls sitting in this wonderful snug cottage, and he was overwhelmed by a feeling that he was sharing their comfortable happiness on false pretences. It was not to him the perfectly satisfying wonder they so obviously wished it to be for him, and at last he could not contain himself, and burst out:—

"You must not expect me to be happy. I cannot be happy. I will swing up to it as high as ever you like, but I must swing back again. Happiness is not life, love is not life, any more than misery is life. If I stay in happiness I die as surely as if I stay in misery. I must be like a pendulum. I must swing to and fro or the clock will stop. . . . I can't make it clear to you, but it is so. What matters is that the clock should go. Jews understand, but they forget that they are the pendulum and they do not live at all. Jews are wonderful people. They know that what matters is the impulse of the soul. It matters so much to them that they have forgotten everything else. And those who are not Jews think of everything else and forget the impulse of the soul. But I know that when I swing from happiness to unhappiness, from good to bad, from light to dark, then a force comes into my soul and it can move up to art, and beyond art, into that place where it can be free. . . . Don't, please, misunderstand me." He addressed himself frankly to Morrison, who dropped her head a little lower. "In love I can no more be free than I can in misery. I will swing as high on one side as I will on the other, and then I can be free."

Morrison folded her hands in her lap and her hair fell over her face. Mendel got up, said good-night, and went over to the farm.

"Well," said Clowes uneasily, "I really think he must be a genius."

Morrison made no reply, and presently Clowes went upstairs to bed, leaving her with her hair drooping over her face, staring into the glowing fire.

"I must learn my lesson," said Morrison to herself. "I must learn my lesson."

She was so little trained for misery, but this was misery enough. But she sat and brooded over it, and summoned up all her strength for the supreme effort of her will, not to be broken and cast down in the swing back from love. She had taught him to surrender himself to love; she must learn to surrender herself to misery, to swing as high on one side as on the other.

For many, many hours she wrestled with herself and broke down fear after fear, weakness after weakness, until she was utterly exposed to the enemies of love and knew that she could be with Mendel through everything. She took out from her paint-box his letter describing the scene in the hospital, which had shocked and horrified her before, and now read and re-read it until she had lived through all the story and could understand both Logan and Oliver.

At last, when she could endure no more, relief came, a new vision of love, no longer lost in the woods or in any earthly beauty, but a clear light illuminating men and women and the earth upon which they dwell. And in her soul, too, the upward impulse began to thrill, and with a sob of thankfulness she lay on her bed fully clothed and went to sleep.

She was not at all disturbed when Mendel said in the morning that he must go back to London to work on his picture. It was right. Their happiness was too tremulous. There was plenty of time for them to take up their ordinary jolly human lives, plenty of time now that they were no longer young.

She walked with him to the station, and on the way they laughed and sang, and he whistled and talked breathlessly about his picture.

"My mother says a cock robin can never mate with a sparrow," he said. "I promised I would take you to see her."

"I should love to come, for I love your mother."

"I would like you to see the Jews as they are," he said, "so simply serving God that their souls have gone to sleep."

As they stood on the platform she said:—

"Mendel, I did . . . begin to understand last night, and it has made you and your work more important than anything else in my life."

He gripped her fiercely by the arm.

"Come to London, now," he said.

"Not now."

"Soon."

"Very soon."

He got into the train, and as it carried him off she could not bear him to go, and, forgetting all the other people, she ran as hard as she could along the platform, and stood at its extremity until the train disappeared round the corner of the embankment, and even then she called after him:—

"Mendel! Mendel!"

THE END